TWO AMERICAN PIONEERS

SEBA SMITH AND ELIZABETH OAKES SMITH

BY

MARY ALICE WYMAN, PH.D.

EDITOR OF

Selections from the Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith

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PREFACE

An interest in that period of American history when democracy was first actively asserting itself led me to the acquaintance of the original Major Jack Downing, a notable fictitious letter-writer in the days of Andrew Jackson. I use the word *original* as many writers in the middle thirties, coveting the fame apparently so easily secured by the first Jack, attempted letters in a similar humorous and popular vein, using the same pseudonym. The result has been a confusion as to the authorship of various collections of Downing letters, which has led to many bibliographical errors. The true Jack Downing was a good-humored Yankee, whose wise saws on political matters and whose adventures in the service of the government were read by an admiring public.

The life of his creator, Seba Smith, is linked with the eventful career of the humorist's wife, Elizabeth Oakes Smith, whose activities as writer, lecturer, and reformer brought her into contact with the most eminent of her contemporaries. Seba Smith pointed a new path for American humor wherein more notable figures were to follow; Elizabeth Oakes Smith heralded a new day when the sphere of woman should be limited only by her capacity. To be sure, the story of a humorist would seem to have little in common with that of a serious advocate for the emancipation of women; but the fact that the lives of these two were united by marriage is perhaps sufficient reason for combining them in literary history.

For the sources of this work I am mainly indebted to Miss Geraldine Oaksmith, a granddaughter of the Smiths, who

has given me access to Mrs. Oakes Smith's writings in manuscript and to innumerable letters and newspaper items. With equal generosity three other granddaughters, Mrs. Eva Oaksmith Hall, Mrs. Gertrude Harris, and Mrs. Aurora Piper, and a grandnephew, Mr. Ruel P. Smith, have furnished me with additional letters, books, and information. Thanks should also be given to Mr. William Bok for personal recollections of Mrs. Oakes Smith, to Mr. Kendall M. Dunbar for information on Maine politics, and to Mr. Don C. Seitz for the use of his library of American humor. The general libraries which have been of most service are those of Bowdoin College, of the Maine Historical Society, of the American Antiquarian Society, of the New York Historical Society, and the New York Public Library.

My studies have been pursued at Columbia University under the guidance of Dr. Carl Van Doren, whose criticism has ever been stimulating and suggestive, and of Professor William Peterfield Trent, who has given me his help and encouragement in unstinted measure. I am also grateful to Professor Dixon Ryan Fox, to Dr. Thomas Ollive Mabbott, to Professor Ralph L. Rusk, and to Professor George C. D. Odell for assistance in the preparation of this book. Others whose aid I would acknowledge are Professor David Eugene Smith, Dr. Jennette Tandy, Professor Raymond Weaver, and Mr. George H. Genzmere of Columbia, and Professor W. B. Mitchell of Bowdoin College. In the task of proofreading I am indebted to Miss Margaret C. Wood of Wadleigh High School for her kind assistance, and to Professor Rusk for the aid of his accurate scholarship.

To

MY MOTHER

TWO AMERICAN PIONEERS

CHAPTER I

SEBA SMITH'S YOUTH, EDUCATION, AND MARRIAGE

SEBA SMITH was born in a log cabin [1] " 'Way Down East" in Buckfield, Maine. His father, one of the first settlers in the town, had built in 1791 this shelter for his family. The family included but three at that time, a wife and small son besides Seba Smith, Senior; on September 14, 1792, however, the second boy was added to the household and was honored by the name of his sire.

In 1792 the Smiths had resided in Maine but five years. Their family home was in Taunton, Massachusetts, where Francis Smith, the first to come to America, spent his later years. From 1640 to 1650 he had lived in Boston, and was, it appears, a gentleman of some property. In Taunton he was engaged in the manufacture of iron, an industry carried on by his son and grandson. Next in line to these ancestors came Seba Smith's great-grandfather, Jasiel Smith, Senior, who had fought in the French and Indian Wars. His son, Lieutenant Jasiel Smith, Junior, enlisted for longer periods of military service, and was made an officer of the Revolution. After the War, in 1787, the latter left Taunton with his wife and eight children for Turner, Maine, where one daughter, who had married an ambitious young trader, was already settled.

Moses Stevens, the grandfather of Seba Smith on his mother's side, was one of the earliest pioneer settlers in

[1] The location of the cabin is still pointed out as the highest part of the farm owned by Captain Maxima on the road running south from the Paris Hill road about four miles from Buckfield.

Turner, having brought his family from New Gloucester, Maine, which was twenty miles to the south, in the spring of 1775.[2] As no roads were made in the locality at that time, travellers had to find their way by blazed trees. For several years before mills were built at Turner, strong men carried on their shoulders sacks of corn to be ground at the New Gloucester mill. Accustomed to such strenuous living from childhood, Aphia Stevens, the mother of Seba Smith, was not one to quail at the rearing of a rude house in the wilderness of Buckfield, some six miles away. Between this town and its parent settlement, Turner, are many rugged hills which the old road left uncircled, for however irksome, the shortest course was then the best. This early route, which ran in a straight line up one of the highest hills and down again, is still pointed out to wayfarers who follow the main road along an easier level. As late as the year 1805 Anna Crossman Smith, wife of Lieutenant Jasiel, writes of making the journey between the two towns with difficulty.

> I went to Buckfield last Saturday [she writes in a letter to her eldest daughter] and came back on Sabbath Day. I went alone. Rode on a man's saddle. I met 15 carriages, slays, lumber boxes and teams when I went, but tho' I had hard work to get by, the track was so narrow and the snow 5, 6, or 7 feet deep, I did not fall. . . .[3]

It was Turner that Seba Smith thought of as the original Downingville in the political satire for which he is remembered. Like the village in the Downing letters, Turner lies between ranges of hills with a body of water called Sandybottom Pond to the south. In the town he may also have found suggestions for his Yankee characters, particularly in members of the Smith family living here or in Buckfield.

[2] W. F. French, *History of Turner,* Portland, 1887, p. 30.

[3] In Library of M. H. S.

Seba Smith's grandfather, Lieutenant Jasiel Smith, seems to have been the prototype of Zebedee Downing, grandfather of the hero in the Downing letters, who never tired of recounting to his grandchildren the "fatigue of Burgwine." The old gentleman had fought both in the ranks and as an officer in the Revolutionary War, and for sixteen or seventeen months had taken part with his father and two brothers in the French and Indian War. With such a military career he doubtless had a sufficient number of thrilling adventures to hold an audience of grandchildren fascinated. As he lived with his son Seba during the last fifteen years of his life, and died when the younger Seba was a youth of nineteen, this grandson had many opportunities to sit, an eager listener, and to catch the gusto which enlivens Zebedee's account of the taking of Burgoyne.

"By and by [the old fellow remarks] we begun to hear the balls whizzing over our heads and the inimy's guns begun to roar like thunder. I felt terribly for a minute or two, but we kept marching up, marching up," said my grandfather, rising and marching across the floor, "for we had orders not to fire a gun until we got so near we could almost reach them with our bagonuts; and there was a hundred drums all in a bunch, rattling enough to craze a nation, and the fifes and the bugles," continued my grandfather, still marching across the floor, "went tudle, tudle, tudle. O, I can hear that very tune ringing in my ears now as plain as if 'twas yesterday, and I never shall forget it to my dying day. When we got so near the inimy that we could fairly see the white of their eyes, the word was 'halt,'" said my grandfather, suddenly halting in the middle of the floor, and sticking his head back as straight as a soldier, "'make ready'; 'twas did in a moment," continued my grandfather, throwing his staff up against his shoulder; "'take aim'; 'twas did in a moment," fetching his staff down straight before his eyes; "'fire!' then, O marcy, what a roar!" said my grandfather, striking his staff down upon the floor, "and such a smother and smoke you couldn't hardly see your hand afore you." [4]

[4] *The Life and Writings of Major Jack Downing,* Boston, 1833. From *My Life,* introducing the Downing letters, pp. 16–17.

Among Seba Smith's contemporaries there were numerous relatives who by name or character may have inspired the creation of other Downingville folks. There was a genuine Aunt Keziah, a younger sister of his father's, who lived on in Buckfield until she was a hundred years old; there was also an Ephraim Andrews, a relative by marriage, who may have suggested the politic Cousin Ephraim. But perhaps the most striking character was his uncle Samuel Andrews, who on account of his shrewdness as a trader and his numerous elections to public office, seems in all probability to have been the original of Uncle Joshua. Living at different times in the three towns of Turner, Buckfield, and Bridgton, he added steadily to his fortunes from 1779, when he came as the first trader to Turner with his goods in his saddlebags, until 1812 or thereabouts, when he had monopolized the trade by boat from Portland to Bridgton and had become the most prosperous citizen of the latter town. In both Turner and Buckfield he was made selectman for three successive years, and was elected the first representative from Buckfield to the General Court in Massachusetts.[5] It would seem reasonable to look to these incidents in the life of Samuel Andrews for the source of Uncle Joshua's skill at driving a bargain and of his political adventures in Downingville and Boston.

In none of the Downingville folk is the delineation of Seba Smith's father apparent, but from him his son seems to have inherited his mild and peaceable nature and a tendency to oppose radical changes in the established order of society. Though a rugged pioneer, Seba Smith, Senior, was inclined to be conservative in his thinking and to stand aloof from party issues. When in 1792 some sixty of the inhabitants of Buckfield and the neighboring town of Tur-

[5] A. Cole and C. F. Whitman, *History of Buckfield,* Buckfield, 1915, p. 182.

ner sent a petition to the General Court for certain religious privileges, he did not, like his three brothers, affix his signature. The question under dispute, that of enforced support of public worship, was one frequently brought up when the separation of Maine and Massachusetts was being urged. Although this petition requested the incorporation of a Baptist Society, one evident purpose was to free the signers from the obligation of paying taxes to maintain religious services. The petition was granted, but the state church continued, and in 1794 Seba Smith, Senior, was elected tithing-man at the first town meeting of Buckfield.[6]

After living in Buckfield for six years Seba Smith, Senior, left his cabin in this settlement and went back with his wife and four children to Turner, where he remained until 1799. In that year he moved to Bridgton, arriving shortly after Samuel Andrews had made his home there. Then one could travel from Bridgton to Portland by boat; now the waterway is navigable only as far as Sebago. In taking this picturesque sail from Sebago Lake up through the Songo River, the Bay of Naples, and Long Lake to North Bridgton, one comes upon interesting landmarks along the shores, connected with Indian occupation. Seba Smith's familiarity in his youth with the lake scenery and its historical associations may have led to his later interest in writing tales based on the history of Maine Indians and neighboring white settlers. Other literary men better known to fame were acquainted with this vicinity and some of them celebrated it in verse. Hawthorne, who spent a year of his boyhood in Raymond, Maine, knew well the wooded shores of Sebago, and Longfellow has written of the winding Songo:

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 108, 134.

Never errant knight of old,
Lost in woodland or on wold,
Such a winding path pursued
Through the sylvan solitude.

Unlike his brother-in-law, Samuel Andrews, the elder Seba did not seem to better his fortunes by frequent changes of residence. During his early years in Bridgton he was second post-rider between Portland and Waterford.[7] The latter town, located a few miles north of Bridgton, was the distributing centre for western Oxford County. Travelling on horseback, Seba Smith, Senior, brought the mail from Portland to Waterford, then distributed the letters and papers in the outlying districts, probably making the round trip once a week. As the salary of mail-carrier was only $190 a year, it was necessary for the boy Seba to work hard at whatever he could find to do from the time that they were settled in Bridgton. During his teens he was occupied at various times in a grocery store, on the farm, in a brick-yard, and in a small cast-iron foundry.

As might be expected, his schooling during these years was very meager; it was possible for him to secure only a few months in the winter in a crude country school with the scantiest equipment. Nevertheless, he managed to pick up enough knowledge by his eighteenth year to give satisfaction as a teacher in the district schools of Bridgton. For several years he continued teaching there and in neighboring towns. In the meantime he was able to get a little instruction at North Bridgton Academy, which his Uncle Samuel had been instrumental in establishing. Here Seba Smith caught a vision of college from the instructor, Bezaleel Cushman, a young Dartmouth graduate, who later prepared Longfellow for Bowdoin; yet on account of limited

[7] *History of Waterford,* published by direction of the town, Portland, 1879, p. 118.

means realization of his dream seemed impossible. An unexpected turn in his fortunes about this time, however, brought college within his reach; he made the acquaintance of a warm-hearted gentleman in Portland who offered him as a loan the funds necessary for a college course. This proposal Seba Smith accepted with gratitude, and entered Bowdoin College in the sophomore class in 1815 after a little more than two years of preparation with Master Cushman of Bridgton Academy.[8] Concentration on Greek and Latin made his admission at this time possible, as the entrance requirements were limited to these subjects and arithmetic.

Bowdoin College was then fourteen years old. Although there were but six on the faculty — the President, one professor, the librarian, and three tutors — the undergraduates were put through a routine of vigorous mental gymnastics. The class in which Seba Smith graduated numbered eighteen, and the complete registration of students in the institution was fifty-seven. This was about the size of the college as represented in Hawthorne's romance *Fanshawe*.

President Appleton, who had a clear, logical mind, stimulated much earnest thinking among the students of his classes, to whom he taught, in the phraseology of the time, mental and moral philosophy, rhetoric, and oratory. Two evenings a week were devoted to Bible study and theological lectures, which all students were required to attend; for the President was a man of evangelical faith who felt a personal responsibility for each of the young collegians.

Of the corps of teachers serving during Seba Smith's college days, Professor Parker Cleaveland, as author of a textbook on mineralogy written some years before that science was generally introduced in colleges, is probably the most

[8] Facts given in Smith's manuscript account of his life, available at Bowdoin College Library.

worthy of mention. Nehemiah Cleaveland, one of the tutors, was alert and interested in educational questions of the time. His name appears as lecturer in 1830 before the American Institute of Instruction, Boston, on Lyceums and Societies for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. Later he compiled, in conjunction with A. S. Packard, a history of Bowdoin College.

Although Seba Smith throughout his life had a retiring disposition and a natural shrinking from society, he seems to have been well acquainted with his classmates and to have shown a good deal of penetration in his judgment of them. A letter written to Nehemiah Cleaveland in 1854,[9] giving his recollections as a help in compiling the history of Bowdoin, indicates that in his college days he had a discriminating mind as well as a sense of humor.

One student he describes as "the only sprig of real aristocracy in the class, a showy young man of fine address and fine broadcloth." He adds that "nature had not been very liberal in his mental endowments but his tailor made up the deficiency" and "no individual in college had more learning bound up in elegant books."

At least three of his classmates achieved something like distinction. Josiah Pierce, whose simplicity of character, integrity, and pure principles he emphasizes, was later eminent in his own state as a judge, as a director of a cotton factory and of a railroad, and as a lyceum lecturer. G. L. Soulé he calls a "good scholar, shrewd, quick, sensible, and excelling in the languages." Mr. Soulé fulfilled the promise of his youth by his fifty years' service as principal at Exeter, where he was one of President Hyde's instructors. A third classmate, Benjamin Hale, later became president of Hobart College, Geneva, New York. He is remembered by Smith as "gentlemanly with a good logical mind, diffident, studi-

[9] Dated Feb. 6, and available at Bowdoin College Library.

ous, but hardly raising the expectation that he would become a college president."

Among the few letters and manuscripts of Seba Smith's which have been preserved is a speech delivered to his fellow students during college days. This would indicate that for a time he was under some disfavor because he used his own composition for declamation instead of memorizing a masterpiece. In defending himself from a charge of ostentation he protested against the "prejudices in college which would hinder the progress and development of genius." "Are we never," he demanded, "to be allowed to deviate from the beaten path of those who precede us?" This spirit of initiative, which was evidently unappreciated at college, was to stand him in good stead in later years.

There were no college fraternities in the early days of Bowdoin; but two literary societies, the Peucinian and the Athenaean were very active. The first, according to Bridge's *Personal Recollections of Hawthorne,* had for members the professors and the more conservative students, among whom Longfellow was numbered; the second attracted young Bowdoin, and with this society Hawthorne allied himself.[10] If these societies were so distinguished during Smith's college days, the conservative element must have predominated in the class of 1818, for the Peucinian Society included among its members Seba Smith, Joseph Fessenden, Benjamin Hale, Josiah Pierce, and several others, while only two in the class belonged to the Athenaean Society. It is at least of interest to look here for influences molding the character of Seba Smith, who, though an original thinker, always shrank from radical measures which would tend to disrupt society.

In studying the curriculum for these years, one finds the

[10] Horatio Bridge, *Personal Recollections of Hawthorne,* N. Y., 1893, p. 32.

classics and mathematics emphasized as in other colleges of the time. There were courses in practical mathematics such as surveying, gaging, and navigation, which had been instituted in the academies of seaport towns since colonial days. These studies may have influenced Seba Smith later in his attempt to make a practical science of geometry, for he writes of his deep interest in mathematics during his college years. Chemistry and natural philosophy or physics had an important place, and ethics, theology, and metaphysics were given in liberal doses. Exercises in rhetoric, logic, and English composition were frequently assigned throughout the college course. Of modern science and history there was no trace; neither were courses given in the modern languages,[11] which were first established in 1825.[12]

Seba Smith, who was twenty-three when he entered college, seems to have lived an exemplary life as a student; he was, however, a member of a community which was strictly supervised. President Appleton was a firm believer in discipline and had fixed a detailed list of penalties for an equal number of misdemeanors and more serious offences. The faculty records for these years disclose countless fines ranging from ten to fifty cents imposed for tardiness to or absence from class or chapel, for playing cards, eating in public taverns without guardians, or making disturbance on the Sabbath. Hawthorne in *Fanshawe* represents "tavern-haunting" as a prevailing "vice" in the college. For intemperance, dissipation, or flagrant disobedience, a student was publicly admonished, and if this was unavailing, rustication followed.

This system of rustication must have brought profit to

[11] *Laws of Bowdoin College,* Hallowell, 1817, Chap. III.

[12] Samuel Longfellow, *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow,* Boston, 1886, Vol. I, p. 67.

more than one poor country minister, upon whom devolved the duty of leading the young scapegrace back into the paths of virtuous learning. Twelve months of the studious and simple life under pastoral care generally resulted in a willingness to abide by the rules of a more gregarious existence at the college.

The time of Seba Smith was very fully occupied, as he used every opportunity to earn money and thus lessen the amount of financial obligation to his Portland friend. Like many other students he took advantage of the long winter vacation, and taught in a country school to help defray the expenses of a year at college. Yet the cost of such a year would seem ridiculously small to a college student of today.

In the dormitory, built in 1808, there were rooms for students, heated by open fireplaces, with no carpet, paint or paper, which rented for $5.00 a year.[13] The tuition was $6.67 a term and the cost of board proportionately low.[14] Seba Smith made his less by boarding himself in his room during one or two terms. The expense of sweeping, bed-making, and repairs was paid by an individual tax on the students. In Bridge's *Personal Recollections of Hawthorne* the author gives his own term bill for the year 1823, which amounted to $14.49,[15] and was probably a little larger than such a bill would have been six years earlier. But the taxes for bed-making and damages then were only $1.11 and $.15 respectively. The average price of board in Bridge's time was $1.50 a week, and possibly a little less in the days of President Appleton.

Either too much study or too much economy was detri-

[13] G. T. Little, *Historical Sketch* in *General Catalogue of Bowdoin College,* Brunswick, 1894, p. xliv. This building was called Maine Hall after the second dormitory was built in 1823.

[14] *Laws of Bowdoin College,* 1817, Chap. VI.

[15] H. Bridge, *Personal Recollections of Hawthorne,* p. 39.

mental to Seba Smith's health toward the end of his college course. Illness prevented him from reciting with the class during his last year; yet he did continue his studies and at commencement secured the highest honor in a class called by Nehemiah Cleaveland the most talented that had yet graduated from Bowdoin. The valedictory oration which Seba Smith delivered on September 2, 1818, was entitled *The Equality with which Nature has Distributed the Means of Happiness.* As no copy of this has been available, it is impossible to tell whether this early effort showed any signs of the humor which later characterized his writing.

After his graduation from Bowdoin College he came to Portland to live, taking a position as teacher in a private school. This occupation he returned to mainly as a means of paying the debts incurred at college while he should be making a decision as to his life work. During this year, however, Seba Smith did not confine himself to teaching; he found time for occasional experiments in verse, and had several poems published in the *Eastern Argus* of Portland. Among these productions were *The Snow Storm* [16] and *The Little Graves,*[16] which were suggested by incidents occurring in Buckfield and Portland. That his first attempts at writing should have been in verse may have been due to family practices in poetizing. An Uncle Jasiel, who had built a log cabin adjoining his brother's in Buckfield, wrote melancholy songs which were set to music, and composed several rhymed epitaphs for gravestones in the village cemetery. Seba's grandmother, Anna Crossman Smith, had also the gift of versifying. As she spent her last years with his father, dying in 1823, the young Seba may have been led by her love of rhyming to make experiments himself.[17]

[16] G. B. Griffith, *The Poets of Maine,* Portland, 1888, pp. 37–40.

[17] C. F. Whitman, *The Genius of Seba Smith,* written for the *Lewiston Journal,* Feb. 4, 1905.

At the end of one year's teaching he found that his health, which had not improved after his leaving college, necessitated a change in occupation. So, abandoning the thought of any immediate progress in his career, he decided to spend a year in travel. As he had no bank account to draw upon, it is probable that he worked his passage wherever he journeyed during this period; the experience, notwithstanding, must have been a broadening one to a young man who had not up to this time been outside the District of Maine. He went through New England and the Atlantic States as far as South Carolina, possibly going much of the way on foot, and stopping occasionally to work. His description of Jack Downing footing it to Washington was probably suggested by this early experience. An ocean trip from Portland to Liverpool is also recorded for this year; but no mention is made of any stay in England.[18] In this case also he doubtless found some employment on shipboard which paid his passage.

He was now in his twenty-eighth year and had made no definite plans for his future. He writes of pondering deeply on this subject as he was sailing into Portland Harbor after his trip to England. No learned profession seemed to attract him; but his mind was strongly drawn toward newspaper work. He gives as one reason for this interest "the favor shown his early poetic effusions." Even while his ship was approaching the harbor, events were happening which were to give him an opportunity to enter his chosen field. Upon landing in Portland, he learned that the former proprietor of the *Eastern Argus*, an important Democratic paper, had just died; he at once sought an interview with Mr. Todd, a journeyman printer, who was left in control of the paper, and as a result of their conversation he was given

[18] Smith's manuscript account of his life in Bowdoin College Library.

the position of assistant editor. He continued his editorship for four years, ultimately purchasing half the interest in the *Eastern Argus* from Mr. Todd.

Not long after Seba Smith had established himself in newspaper work he became engaged to Elizabeth Prince of Portland. A girl of seventeen not fully grown to womanhood, she entered into this contract in obedience to her mother's wishes; but she could appreciate in Seba Smith the qualities which had aroused her mother's interest in the match: his scholarly attainments, his poetic ability, his modesty, and his integrity of character.

Marriage, however, was unsought by Elizabeth Prince. Her life up to this time had been care-free. Born in the country at Yarmouth in 1806, she had early run wild in the woods and fields. She had been an inveterate reader, dipping into books of all varieties from *Paradise Lost* to Fox's *Book of Martyrs* and Fielding's *Tom Jones.* Her associations as a child with two grandfathers of conflicting views, the Universalist and free-thinker, Seth Blanchard, and the Puritan, David Prince, stimulated an enquiring mind. When she was of school age, her parents moved to Portland, where she was taught for a time by Rachel Neal, the mother of John Neal, and a Quakeress of strong character. It was during her schooldays in Portland, when Elizabeth was beginning to dream of higher education and of a life devoted to teaching and study, that Seba Smith became acquainted with her. He was doubtless attracted by her precocious mind as well as by the grace and beauty of her person; but had not the mother of Elizabeth Prince strongly opposed her ambitions and insisted on matrimony as the only proper career for a woman, the marriage which occurred on March 6, 1823, might never have been brought about.[19]

[19] Facts of her early life given in *Selections from the Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith,* Lewiston Journal Co., 1924, Chaps. I, II, III.

True to her Puritan forbears, Elizabeth Prince Smith was imbued with a stern sense of duty; accordingly she took up bravely the responsibilities which were hers in managing, with the help of one servant, a household of six, five being apprentices to the printing business. This routine of daily tasks left slight opportunity for cultivation of the mind, which had been her greatest pleasure before marriage. Yet she did manage to crowd in study during the early morning hours, and after a time she sent anonymously to the press scraps of verse and prose, which were favorably received. Then, however, Seba Smith would hardly have surmised that the helpmate he had chosen, shy, retiring, yet ambitious and persistent, was one day to win wide renown, urging from the lyceum platform further opportunities for women.

CHAPTER II

LITERARY CULTURE IN PORTLAND AND VICINITY AND THE SMITHS' EARLY CREATIVE WORK

PORTLAND, which was to be the home of Seba Smith and his wife for sixteen years after their marriage, was of all the places in which they were to live the one they held most dear. It would be difficult to find a city more beautiful for natural surroundings. Built upon what was originally an island, it lies between hills to the east and west, which are more than one hundred and fifty feet above sea level. At that time the residential section was limited to the valleys between these hills. Instead of the stately houses of today on eastern and western promenades, there was then a weather-beaten observatory on Mount Joy, now Munjoy Hill, and an old burying ground on Bram Hall Hill. Both these heights were merely picturesque outskirts of Portland, where an abundance of berries and wild flowers grew. The maritime industries of the city were indicated then as now, however, by a street lined with wharves extending along the water front.

Since the War of 1812 Portland had been gradually recovering from business depression and was becoming less provincial in its management of secular affairs. In 1823 the first steamboat to make trips between Boston and Portland was established and thus made possible a speedier journey than that by stagecoach, the only other means of travel. People were then regarding with less caution the theatre, which had earlier been condemned as not conducive to peace, order, or good morals. Although Elizabeth Arnold, the mother of Poe, had charmed Portland audiences for two

months in the winter of 1797, no stage plays were allowed from 1805, when the town meeting voted against the erection of a theatre, until 1820.[1] After that date theatrical performances were held in the town hall; it was not until 1830, however, that the first theatre was built in Portland, at the cost of about $10,000.[2]

In the meantime energies which were held aloof from worldly pleasures had manifested themselves in religious and political activities. By far the most numerous of the public buildings in Portland were churches, and religious discussions were serious and protracted. Dr. Ichabod Nichols, who came to the First Parish Church in 1807 and used his influence to strengthen Unitarianism, was regarded by many as a wolf in the fold;[3] and the various sects in town, including Baptists, Methodists, and Quakers, as well as the orthodox Puritans or Congregationalists, found occasions for bitter argument.

When Seba Smith and Elizabeth Oakes Smith, as she is generally remembered,[4] were settled in Portland, three years had passed since Maine's admission to the Union as a separate state; and Portland, the first capital, in which the conference was held for drafting the state constitution, was occupying an increasingly important position.

In this city and its vicinity literary activity had not been dormant, as may be seen in looking back at some of the predecessors of the Smiths in authorship. Before Seba Smith undertook his editorial work in Portland, a notable resident, Madam Wood by name, had made her reputation as one of the first women novelists in America, and the poetry of

[1] William Willis, *History of Portland from 1632 to 1864*, Portland, 1865, p. 784.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 785.

[3] J. C. Perkins, *How the 1st Parish Church became Unitarian* (sermon preached May 7, 1899), Portland, 1900.

[4] Cf. Chap. V, pp. 112–113, 116.

Eliza True and Enoch Lincoln had been published as the first verse of any consequence in the Maine territory.

Madam Wood, earlier Sally Sayward Barrell, whose home during her childhood and first marriage was at Kittery in York County, the oldest part of Maine, is obviously the most important of this group, and is noteworthy because at least once she tried to write a novel drawn from actual American life. Her four books, *Julia, Dorval, the Speculator, Amelia,* and *Ferdinand and Elmira,* were written in Kittery before her second marriage in 1804. Except in *Dorval, the Speculator,* Madam Wood concerned herself mainly with foreign characters and settings, imitating the tale of terror then popular on the continent. *Amelia* is partially set in America, however, and *Dorval, the Speculator* is taken completely from American life. The preface to this volume in its emphasis on the need of American books reminds one of the introduction to Royall Tyler's *Algerine Captive* written some four years earlier.

> . . . Hitherto we have been indebted to France, Germany, and Great Britain, for the majority of our literary pleasures. Why we should not aim at independence, with respect to our mental enjoyments, as well as for our more substantial gratifications, I know not. Why must the amusements of our leisure hours cross the Atlantic? and introduce foreign fashions and foreign manners, to a people, certainly capable of fabricating their own. Surely we ought to make a return in the same way. I should indeed be vain, if I indulged for a moment an idea that any of my productions were worth transporting to another climate, or that they could be read with any satisfaction, where the works of a Moore, a Burney, a Kotzebue, or a Rowland had originated. But the attempt will be forgiven where the design is good; and it may possibly call forth the pens of some of my country women, better qualified to instruct and amuse. I hope no one will suppose that I entertain ideas so fallacious as to imagine it necessary for a female to be a writer: far from it. I am sure
>
> "That woman's noblest station is retreat";

and that a female is never half so lovely, half so engaging or amiable, as when performing her domestic duties, and cheering with smiles of unaffected good humor, those about her. But there are some, who, forgetful of those sacred duties, or viewing them all in a circle very circumscribed, devote a large portion of time to dissipation, and such fashionable occupations, as waste many hours that might be devoted to better purposes. If a small share of that time were attached to the pen, I am certain no future author would agree with the Abbé Raynal, "That America had produced but few persons of genius": . . .

The following pages are wholly American; the characters are those of our own country. The author has endeavored to catch the manners of her native land; and it is hoped no one will find upon perusal, a lesson, or even a sentence, that authorizes vice or sanctions immortality. . . .

The setting is in and near New York, and the story is told mainly by letters, which frequently throw light on contemporary conditions. One summer the heroine spends in Boston where she writes of the social pleasures enjoyed. There is much criticism of society for wasting time in fashionable dissipations, among which card-playing is most unreservedly condemned. Masculine women are laughed at, and the influence of Mary Wollstonecraft is deprecated. The practice of imprisoning debtors regardless of the amount owed, which was as prevalent, at the time, in America as in England, is graphically illustrated.

Dorval, the Speculator was published in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and *Ferdinand and Elmira*, in Baltimore, where, the publisher asserted, creations of genius and fancy secured a warmer reception than in New England.

In 1804, this literary lady married General Abiel Wood of Wiscasset, and for seven years she made her home there in a little world very gay and sophisticated compared with the serious and provincial town of Portland. In the early part of the century Wiscasset was the only place of commercial importance in Maine east of Portland; here several

merchants had built up an extensive trade with foreign countries, and having amassed considerable wealth, lived in what was in those times the greatest luxury. An imposing line of old colonial mansions still stands as a reminder of these prosperous days.

Madame Wood continued to write here for her own amusement, but if *Dorval, the Speculator* correctly represented her views, she doubtless found herself more in her element when she removed to Portland after the death of her husband in 1811. She was there a constant attendant at the First Parish Church of the Unitarian denomination, which gradually included the more intellectual people of Portland, the Longfellow family being the most conspicuous members. In her peculiar headdress, which was a white cap built up high on her head like a turban and held under her chin by dainty ruffles completely surrounding her face, she was a conspicuous figure at all public functions. She continued to be highly regarded in Portland during her later years, and died there in 1854 at the age of ninety-five.[5]

The first book of Maine poems, published in 1811, was the work of Eliza True, a native of Portland. Her volume, *The Amaranth,* includes selections in both prose and verse, and is worthy of notice as a precursor of the annuals and gift-books beginning with *The Forget-me-not* in England in 1823. In various magazines of the day one frequently comes across her *nom de plume* "Eliza from Maine" attached to short poems from her pen.

The credit for the first Maine book entirely in verse belongs to Enoch Lincoln, who was later one of the first governors of the state. He seems to have had less talent than Eliza True for versifying; his poem *The Village,* however, which comprises some seventy-eight pages, shows more

[5] Cf. Henry E. Dunnack, *The Maine Book,* Augusta, Me., 1920, pp. 140–146.

thought and sustained effort than her work. A native of Massachusetts and graduate of Harvard, he made his home in Fryeburg, Maine, and was inspired by his surroundings to write a poem which should show the physical and moral character of rural scenes. Beginning with a view of the mountains about Fryeburg, of the natives, of the rattlesnake Saco, as he designated that river, and of the lumbering industry, the author turned from concrete pictures to disquisitions on slavery, freedom, women, education, and party spirit. Higher education for women he warmly urged, and censured severely what seemed to him the plan of man:

> By education trifling and confined,
> To check the progress of the female mind.

He foreshadowed the attitude taken by Seba Smith in his Downing letters when he wrote:

> Yet O' beware of Party Spirit's rage
> The source of direst ills in every age.

The poem was published in Portland in 1816.

In 1817 was organized the first recorded literary club in Portland, the Paah Denwyke Society, playfully named to represent the sound made by a bull-frog. This club included among its members Nathaniel Deering, William Cutter, and Grenville Mellen. It can not be ascertained whether or not Seba Smith belonged to this society; however, those connected were all contemporaries of his in Portland, and several were later associated with him in New York. Papers, poems, and songs were contributed at the meetings of the club, and Madam Wood might have rejoiced at the regulations had she been admitted to membership. No liquors, tobacco, cards, or gambling were allowed; music, chess, and checkers supplied the amusement. The last recorded meet-

ing was held in 1823 at the home of William Cutter, where Grenville Mellen gave the address.[6]

Nathaniel Deering, one of the charter members of the society, wrote sprightly and humorous verse to grace various state occasions. His *Song of Maine,* in which, at a feast given by Jove, all the gods promise gifts to the new state, was read at a public dinner given Governor King and other distinguished guests. In 1822 he wrote humorous lines entitled *Portland: Some Account thereof,* showing her increasing prosperity since the War of 1812, when the Embargo Act crippled her most enterprising citizens. There are references to new shops going up, to music clubs, to architecture as exemplified by the State House, and to the old barn in Silver Street, where jigs, farces, and pantomime were much applauded. Speaking of actors, he added:

> Kean never graced our boards, but astute Kemble
> Solus perform'd Iago and the Moor;
> 'Twas somewhat novel and — I wont dissemble,
> Completely set the audience in a roar.
> It could not well be otherwise — the fellow
> Had half his visage lamp-blacked for Othello.

Some of Nathaniel Deering's tales and sketches appeared later in well-known magazines in New York, but he never emerged far from his obscurity.

William Cutter, who was studying at Bowdoin College during Seba Smith's course there, graduating in 1820, wrote enough verse to be included among the Bowdoin poets. He started out in life, however, as a merchant in Portland, and after failing in business moved to New York, where he was well known as a publisher.

Grenville Mellen was by far the most important of the

[6] E. H. Elwell, *Early Clubs of Portland,* in *Portland Scrap Book,* Vol. III, pp. 70–71, in Library of M. H. S. Cf. N. Goold, *An Early Portland Club, Daily Eastern Argus,* Nov. 16, 1912.

members of the Paah Denwyke Society. By 1823 he was hardly known as a man of letters, but in 1825, in his twenty-sixth year, he wrote an *Ode on the Celebration of Bunker Hill,* to be delivered at the commemoration exercises. Lafayette was present, with a crowd of 100,000 to welcome him, and Webster was the orator. Mellen's poem, which is remembered for the excellence of one line, has gained a secure place in the treasuries of American verse. It has been used in a sonnet by Henry Augustus Beers, *The Singer of One Song,*[7] and very lately has appeared in a sonnet by Louis Untermeyer. The latter has given the line exactly:

> . . . And high
> Above the fight the lonely bugle grieves!

Beers, in changing it to

> High over all the lonely bugle grieves!

seems to have taken from it much of its original force.

Mellen wrote a collection of stories entitled *Sad Tales and Glad Tales* under the pseudonym Reginald Reverie, and published them in 1827. In 1828 he moved to New York, where he continued writing verse for annuals and magazines; many of these poems he collected in a volume published in 1833. In his poetizing he experimented with the meters of Gray, Dryden, and Milton, using blank verse most frequently. As might be expected from his models, a sombre view of life is often represented in his poems; but this does not cloud the spirit of buoyant aspiration which breathes through most of his poetry. Poe wrote of him that he had genius unquestionably, but that there was something in his temperament which obscured it. The last tribute by Louis Untermeyer called *The Single Song* reiterates this earlier criticism:

[7] E. C. Stedman, *An American Anthology,* Boston and New York, 1900, p. 505.

Your lines are buried letters and your odes
  Were yawned into oblivion; the years
Have taught us fresher tunes and livelier modes.
  Even your name is nothing in our ears.
But what of that? You thrust one wavering rhyme
  Like a thin torch down the dark hall of Time.[8]

There were other Portland writers of this time not connected with the Paah Denwyke Society. Isaac MacLellan, Mrs. Ann S. Stephens, Nathaniel P. Willis, and John Neal were all natives of Portland, and although of unequal literary importance, all were at least known outside their own state.

Isaac MacLellan's name is remembered only as appearing in the list of poets associated with Bowdoin College, where he was graduated in 1826, a year after Longfellow and Hawthorne. He spent much of his youth and later life in Boston and New York, and wrote regularly for *The Knickerbocker* from 1835 to 1842. His verse was widely circulated in annuals and gift-books; like Grenville Mellen, he was an imitator of Gray, but unlike Mellen, did not achieve even a modest distinction.

The vogue of Willis as a clever versifier and sprightly essayist needs no comment. His special connection with Portland and Maine writers is seen in *The Legendary,* edited by him in his twenty-second year, 1828. The names William Cutter, Grenville Mellen, and Isaac MacLellan all appear among his selections of verse. In later years as editor of *The Home Journal,* he frequently printed in his columns the work of Elizabeth Oakes Smith.

Mrs. Ann S. Stephens, who as a girl of seventeen took her first story to John Neal for criticism, became one of the

[8] By courtesy of Mr. Untermeyer, from *Roast Leviathan,* N. Y., 1923, p. 101.

most popular writers of fiction in her day. In 1835 she helped to project and edited the *Portland Magazine,* a monthly publication in Portland and Bangor, in which appear the names of Maine writers such as Grenville Mellen and William Cutter. This periodical may have influenced the starting of the *Maine Monthly Magazine* in July, 1836, a venture which lasted but a year although it compared very favorably with other magazines of the day. One is surprised at the lack of provincialism, at the numerous contributors from outside the state, and at the discriminating judgments made of contemporary writing. After editing the *Portland Magazine* for a year, Mrs. Stephens went to New York, where her name became much more widely known in literary work.

John Neal, next to Nathaniel Willis in importance among this group, was the son of Rachel Neal, whose school Elizabeth Prince had attended. He was early thrown upon his own resources, and finished his schooling at the age of twelve. From 1815 to 1827, the period when most of his writing was done, he was absent from Portland. During part of this time he was associated with John Pierpont in Baltimore, where he tried business, studied law, and did a prodigious amount of writing. From 1823 to 1827 he was in England, writing on topics of American interest in the British magazines and trying to bring about sympathetic relations on literary matters between the two countries. He made, notwithstanding, many enemies in the United States by telling as he said, the truth about our national literature.

Hence, when in 1827 he returned to the United States, planning to make his future home in Portland, where he would go on with his profession as a lawyer, he received a far from hospitable welcome. To his fellow citizens he was a " renegade, who had basely traduced his native town and

country for hire."[9] This reputation he gradually lived down because of the unceasing interest which he took in the welfare and progress of the city.

It is Neal's special mission to England and his early encouragement of Poe rather than his bulky volumes of fiction and mass of verse and critical material, that make him a significant figure in early American literature. A man who would write eight large volumes in less than six months could hardly expect to achieve work of outstanding excellence. Had his mind been disciplined by a more thorough education, his genius might have appeared in more sustained efforts rather than in the flashes which occasionally light up the turgid melodrama of his novels. Though highly colored by Byronism, his works in fiction are based mainly on American history. His first story, *Keep Cool,* published in 1817, follows Tyler's *Algerine Captive* and Madame Wood's *Dorval, the Speculator* in being chiefly concerned with American characters and manners. *The Down Easters,* published in 1833, is an attempt to give a faithful representation of Yankee characters with special emphasis on Yankee dialect. John Neal excited more or less attention in his day by his critical essays, and by some well-meaning admirers was even ranked with Poe, who, himself, had abundant faith in his friend's judgment. His poetry, although widely circulated in magazines and gift books, includes many passages which in vocabulary and versification show an amateurish hand. One can not fail to note occasionally, however, a certain rugged strength, which in its expression does not lose point or force. As a novelist, critic, and poet he showed versatile talents which command some admiration; but the fact that this self-educated Yankee from Down East was accepted as a regular contributor to *Blackwood's* in Eng-

[9] John Neal, *Wandering Recollections of a Busy Life,* Boston, 1869, p. 330.

land is of far greater interest to students of American letters.

If we need a searchlight in surveying the group of minor writers in Portland who were contemporaries of Seba Smith and Elizabeth Oakes Smith, no such illumination is necessary when we come to the names of Hawthorne and Longfellow, who have made Portland and its vicinity significant in the history of American literature. During these years, however, Longfellow's name was not well known as a poet, for his first independent collection of poems was not published until 1839. In his college days, from 1821 to 1825, he sent poems occasionally to *The United States Literary Gazette*. Then as he put his best efforts into his preparation for his profession, taking the chair of Modern Languages at Bowdoin in 1829, his poetic productions were less frequent.

Hawthorne, a classmate of Longfellow's at Bowdoin, was not such a painstaking student, but he made his experiences at college the basis for his first romance, *Fanshawe*, published anonymously in 1828. He was for a time pupil of Rev. Caleb Brading, of Stroudwater, a suburb of Portland, but most of his year in Maine before college was spent in Raymond, near Sebago Lake.

Beside these notable figures in American letters Seba Smith and Elizabeth Oakes Smith quite properly take modest places, but our concern is with them. The early work of both was largely poetic. Many verses from Seba Smith's pen were printed in the *Eastern Argus* and curiously enough showed little indication of that rich vein of humor which was to bring him his greatest success as a writer. These poems were in the main unsigned or appeared over a pseudonym. *The Burning Ship at Sea*, signed "Memnon," was markedly superior to his other poetic attempts and called forth much commendation. It was suggested by the destruction of the ship *Abema* near England in 1821 and was

widely circulated in the papers that year and reprinted again in 1840 and 1844. Not until the last appearance did it bear the author's name.[10] In the metrical scheme of this poem Seba Smith plainly imitated Campbell, with whose *Battle of the Baltic,* published in 1800, he must have been familiar. One at least of the six stanzas may be quoted:

Now the flames are spreading fast —
  With resistless rage they fly,
Up the shrouds and up the mast,
  And are flickering to the sky;
Now the deck is all ablaze; now the rails —
  There's no place to rest their feet;
  Fore and aft the torches meet,
  And a winged lightning sheet
  Are the sails.

Elizabeth Oakes Smith had attempted writing verse since childhood, and after her marriage many of her poems were published anonymously in the columns of the *Eastern Argus.* Wishing, however, to get a critical opinion of her work, she sent some stanzas to John Neal, who was then editor of *The New England Galaxy.* His appreciation published in the paper with her poem gave her generous praise. One of the stanzas will sufficiently illustrate the grace and playful fancy of these verses:

There is the hum of the laboring bee!
  He's rolled so long on the holly-hock's cup,
That the flower in spite has shut its leaves,
  And closed the wanton intruder up:
And there he is with his yellow thighs,
  A captive made with his dusty prize.[11]

As an editor Seba Smith showed independence of character and courage in living up to his convictions. Believing that a mean person should be exposed, he allowed what he

[10] See *The Rover,* Vol. III, No. 26, p. 400.

[11] Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith in MS., p. 400.

understood to be a truthful, but uncomplimentary, representation of an unnamed political character to appear in his columns. When challenged by the man known to be the object of these aspersions, he paid no heed, and came very near suffering injury at the hands of his assailant. Public spirit, however, was with the editor, and the offender was hurried away to trial for disturbing the peace.[12]

Seba Smith continued the editorship of the *Eastern Argus* until March 21, 1826, when notice was given in the paper that the partnership of Todd and Smith had dissolved. It was also observed that the subscription list which Smith found to be 2000 had increased to 2500. His share in the paper was sold, and he rested for a time from editorial work that he might devote himself more completely to literature. In the fall of 1829, however, he started a weekly paper, the *Family Reader*, which he defined as "a useful, interesting, family miscellany with no political prejudice or vilification, with a condensed summary of world news and current literature, and hints on agriculture." In addition he began publishing on October 13 of 1829 the *Portland Courier*, a paper noteworthy as the first daily north or east of Boston. The political aim of the *Portland Courier* was, like that of the *Family Reader*, to give a candid and independent representation of all parties.

Both papers reflect the sentiments of Seba Smith and his wife in prose articles or in verse. Frequent scraps of homely rhyme on Yankee traits, doubtless from the editor's pen, would seem to foreshadow the rustic humor of the Downing letters. In a vivid sketch entitled *Death at the Toilet*,[13] he

[12] James P. Vance, who asserted that he was the person exposed in the *Eastern Argus* for Aug. 10, 1824, was editor of the *Statesman*, a Portland paper which, according to Seba Smith, was attempting to disorganize the Democratic party under the pretense of promoting it.

[13] *Portland Courier*, Apr. 5, 1831.

directed his satire against the follies and vanities of the fashionable world. Mrs. Oakes Smith's articles, which were signed "E," included verses as well as historical sketches and legends of Maine in prose. When the editor received commendation for the opinions expressed in his paper by the gentleman who signed his name "E," he took pleasure in replying that the sex of his correspondent had been mistaken.

In the meantime, after selling his share in the *Eastern Argus,* he had bought a home in Westbrook at a sufficient distance from the town to afford him the seclusion he desired for writing. Mrs. Oakes Smith, not as well pleased at being so far removed from their friends, describes the home in her autobiography as an "old leaky house, which neither repairs, paint, nor varnish could make quite comfortable"; yet she speaks with interest of the "nice garden and bees." This house, which is still in a very good state of preservation, is the first on the left after one crosses the bridge from Portland to Westbrook, and is plainly built of brown brick, having a gabled roof and many small-paned windows. In front on either side of the worn doorsteps are tall elm trees, and on the left, separated from the house by a narrow lane, are the rippling waters of Back Cove, an inlet from Portland Harbor.

Here Seba Smith was to conceive and introduce to the American public perhaps the most popular literary character of the middle thirties, Major Jack Downing. It was during January of 1830 that this Yankee hero first appeared in a series of epistles published in the *Portland Courier.*[14] Jack was introduced as a rustic youth in the great town of

[14] These letters appeared in the *Family Reader* as well as in the *Portland Courier,* and came out through January and February on the front page of the *Boston Daily Advertiser* in company with extracts from Hood's *Comic Annual.*

Portland, whither he had travelled from Downingville with a load of axe-handles, a cheese, and a bundle of footings.[15] Not being very successful in trade, he lingered long enough to get entangled in politics, and wrote home of the queer things he had seen and heard as a visitor in the legislature. Gradually his interests widened, and his ambitions for an office took him to Washington, where in the days of "Old Hickory" there were plenty of plums for friends to pick in the White House garden. It was perhaps natural that in the days of an emerging democracy, when, as the traveller de Tocqueville observed, "affluent classes of society were removed from the direction of political affairs,"[16] a threadbare hero, making his way by his wit and good humor, and footing it to Washington, should have been a general favorite. Jack's letters were indeed popular throughout New England and the Atlantic seaboard, and aroused enthusiasm in regions of the frontier, where sturdy pioneer settlers were as delighted over the new democratic element at the seat of government as were the plain country folk "'Way Down East."

[15] Material used to foot boots and stockings.

[16] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* N. Y., 1838, p. 159.

CHAPTER III

THE ORIGINAL DOWNING LETTERS

In creating a rustic character who with simple wisdom and sly satire should comment on national affairs, Seba Smith employed a new device which was to be borrowed and exploited by many of his successors in the field of American humor. Jack Downing's letters cleared the way for a host of roving adventurers, lowly philosophers, and unlettered political critics, many of whom gained greater renown than their Yankee ancestor.[1] His celebrity, though meteoric, was indeed nation-wide; but his lineal descendants, Sam Slick,[2] Artemus Ward, and Hosea Biglow, in the humorous guise of the smart peddler, the whimsical showman, and the homely interpreter of public events, won for themselves a more lasting recognition and international repute. Those who have been beguiled by these shrewd spokesmen, or by Bill Arp, Petroleum V. Nasby, Mr. Dooley, and their ilk, will look back in grateful acknowledgment to the first successful performer in their family line, Major Jack Downing.

In his conception of the Major, Seba Smith was possibly influenced by the humorous adventures of Smollett's roving heroes. He may have taken suggestions from the sharp wit of Peregrine Pickle and the uncouthness of Humphrey Clinker as they set forth to see the world. More various

[1] Cf. William Peterfield Trent, *A History of American Literature 1607–1865,* New York and London, 1919, Chap. XVIII. Cf. Jennette Tandy, *Crackerbox Philosophers in American Humor and Satire,* N. Y., 1925, passim.

[2] Cf. V. L. O. Chittick, *Thomas Chandler Haliburton,* N. Y., 1924, Chap. XIV.

are the sources which may have led him to attach Jack as confidential adviser to "Old Hickory," for such a rôle had been fairly common in European romance.[3] To early American humorists he seems to have owed a comparatively slight debt. From Franklin he may have learned the comic effect of exaggeration, but Jack Downing did not follow Poor Richard, as did Sam Slick, in making wise saws which could not be disentangled from the general content of his narrative. The buffoonery of the traditional stage Yankee had no place in the characterization of the Major. If Smith took any hint for him from Captain Farrago's Irish squire in Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry*, this jaunty and ignorant office-seeker was completely metamorphosed in the shrewd and self-reliant hero of the Downing letters.

There seems to have been a nearer model for the Downing correspondence than has yet been mentioned, in the letters of Joe Strickland, written by George W. Arnold[4] of New York in the later twenties and republished in Maine. Joe was a "Varmonter" in the city of New York, who wrote home of his doings to his Uncle Ben with messages to Ant Nabby Mahew, Dekon Armariah Bigalow, Square Pettybone, and other of his kin. His adventures in the legislature at Albany,[5] where he remonstrated with both houses because

[3] With Sancho Panza and his friendly admonitions to his master, Don Quixote, Seba Smith must have been acquainted. There seems to be no evidence that he had read Le Sage; but as an analogue to the Major in his office as attaché to "Old Hickory," we might mention Gil Blas, whose *savoir-faire* admitted him to the confidences of nobility and royalty. Having gained the favor of an archbishop by flattery, he hears him say: "Gil Blas, henceforth give thyself no uneasiness about thy fortune; I undertake to make it extremely agreeable; I love thee, and as a proof of my affection make thee my confidant." *The Novels of Le Sage and Charles Johnston*, London, 1822, p. 155.

[4] From 1814 Arnold appears in the New York directories as a merchant, and from 1826 to 1830 he kept a lottery office on Broadway.

[5] *The New York Enquirer*, June 9, 1827.

of their " Pattint Murralaty " in putting through strict lottery laws may have suggested Jack Downing's concerns with his own state government. Joe's writings, however, showed absurd spelling rather than any attempt to use a local dialect. He says, for instance:

> Gloryus Unkle Ben — Thees fu lynes kum hopping u ar wel and informin u that ime as slick as an eal . . . Ime goin to sing in Chatum Garden, where i went tother nite un seed a feller on the stage lookt gist like a Varmonter. . . .[6]

Arnold was quite clearly following in the wake of the stage Yankee rather than trying to reproduce with any exactness New England speech and traits. Joe's political interests and activities seem also to have ended in purely local issues; nor does he rove beyond the great city of New York or attach himself as confidant to any distinguished leader. His writings were witty and popular, but his limited outlook and his slight characterization as a " Varmonter " would apparently account for the relative obscurity of the Strickland letters. They were, indeed, reprinted in New England, particularly in Maine papers with which Seba Smith must have been familiar.[7] His acquaintance with Joe Strickland is in fact intimated in an editorial of later years by his use of the name to designate a quaint New England character.[8] It is consequently not improbable that Arnold's attempt at humorous caricature in letter-writing suggested the creation of Major Jack Downing.

Like many accredited inventions the Downing letters evidently owed distinct obligations to earlier work, but they would hardly have gained such widespread popular favor

[6] *The Lincoln Intelligencer,* Wiscasset, Me., March 17, 1826.

[7] Strickland letters were published in *The Oxford Observer,* Paris, Me., Mar. 2, Apr. 5, and June 29, 1826. In last issue letter republished from *The New England Galaxy.*

[8] *United States Magazine,* Vol. III, p. 78. (July, 1856.)

had it not been for their author's own ingenuity. It was this and his immediate observation of New England rustic life and manners[9] which enabled him to produce a new and striking figure in American humor emerging from an appropriate background and carrying out his creator's purpose in satirizing political situations and events. Unconsciously these letters also reflect to a marked degree the self-satisfaction of a democratic society in the full swing of national enthusiasm such as was exhibited in Jackson's time. Good nature, audacity, physical prowess, and shrewdness supplied the necessary qualities to make of Jack Downing a popular hero. One follows him with interest from the time he first starts out from the farm to seek his fortune, impressed with his father's gift of a dollar to start him in life, until three years later when he is nominated as a candidate for President. During this period he is defeated while running for governor in his own state, and so goes on foot to Washington for bigger game; there he takes a hand in a Cabinet quarrel, which establishes his reputation for bravery, and leads first to a captain's commission and military service in Madawaska, Maine,[10] and then to a major's commission at the time of nullification difficulties when war seemed imminent. Later he accompanies Jackson as his confidential adviser on his tour Down East, and during this journey is nominated for President. This event in his life he gives as the reason for collecting his first series of letters in book form with a prefatory biography.

The life of Downingville and the vivid portrayal of the numerous members of the Downing family, who have a part

[9] See Chap. I, pp. 1–6.

[10] The delay of Great Britain in coming to an agreement on the Northeast boundary led to complaints by the people of Maine and New Brunswick as to the use of disputed territory, and made necessary military occupation of the boundary by the Federal army.

in this correspondence, give a fitting atmosphere and background to the political career of the hero in the Downing letters.

Downingville [wrote the Major] is a snug, tidy sort of a village, situated in a valley about two miles long, and a mile and a half wide, scooped out between two large rugged hills that lie to the east and west, having a thick forest of trees to the north, and a clear pond of water, with a sandy beach to the south. It is about three miles from the main road, as you go back into the country, and is jest about in the middle of Down East.[11]

Here his grandfather had come after the Revolution with his family, and prepared a spot to build the first log cabin in the settlement. How Zebedee cleared the land of timber and made it ready for cultivation is racily described in his grandson's narrative.

When the leaves and the twigs of the trees that grandfather had cut down got considerable dry in the sun, he went out one warm clear afternoon and sot fire to 'em. The wind was blowing a considerable of a breeze from the southward, and the fire spread almost as fast as a horse could run. Grandmother used to say it was the grandest sight she ever see, to see them six acres of trees all in a light flame at once, and the fire streaming up as high as the tallest pines, sometimes in a broad red sheet, and sometimes in narrow strips that went up rolling and bending like ten thousand fiery dragons' tongues. After the fire had gone through it, grandfather went to work to clear it up. He picked up the limbs and bits that were left, and threw 'em in heaps and sot fire to 'em again, and he laid sticks across the large logs that were too heavy to move, and *niggered* them off with fire and then rolled them up in piles and sot fire to 'em again and burnt 'em all up smack smooth. Then he went to work and planted the ground all over to corn, and potatoes, and punkins, and beans, and squashes — and round near the house he planted water-millions and mush-millions, and cowcumbers, and beats, and carrots, and turnips, and grandmother

[11] *The Life and Writings of Major Jack Downing,* Boston, 1833, *My Life,* p. 13.

carried out a whole apron full of seeds of all kinds of 'arbs that ever grew in old Massachusetts, and sowed 'em round, and they come up as thick as hops.[12]

As Zebedee Downing had ten sons and daughters who married and reared their families in this community, it is little wonder that the settlement bore his name. In Jack Downing's time it was typical of most New England villages of the day, with its "schoolhouse, a tavern, a minister, and a doctor, and a blacksmith, and a shoe-maker, and folks that work at most all sorts of trades." Although Jack early found the place too small to hold him, his pride in his native town never left him as he passed on from glory to glory. After two years' absence in Portland and Washington, he was sent home with a captain's commission to collect forces to cope with the trouble in Madawaska. The different ways in which his kindred showed their joy at his return are described by Jack graphically and with humorous exaggeration:

> Cousin Nabby hopped right up and down, like a mouse treed in a flour barrel; and Ephraim snapped his thumb and finger, and spit on his hands as though he had a cord of wood to chop; and Poor Ant Keziah set down and cried as much as two hours steady. Uncle Joshua catched down his pipe, and made the smoke roll out well; I never saw him smoke so fast before in my life; he finished two pipes full of tobacco in less than five minutes; I felt almost like a fool myself, and had to keep winking and swallowing, or I should have cried as hard as any of 'em.[13]

Pride in his native village prompted Jack to urge a visit from the President, in anticipation of which all Downingville made careful preparations. Cousin Nabby's account of the washing, scrubbing, cooking, and decorating is none the less vivid for her disappointment that he never arrived. Aunt Keziah's homestead breathes of the old rustic New

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 22. [13] *Ibid.*, letter of Nov. 8, 1831, p. 145.

England with every part of the house washed from garret to cellar, the floors all sanded, a bunch of green rushes in all the fireplaces, and the pantry redolent with pumpkin and huckleberry pies, and a great pot of pork and beans. Little wonder that Aunt Keziah fell down in a "conniption fit" when the news came that the President had gone on to Washington, for aside from all these labors she had sacrificed her choicest bit of finery in ripping up her red silk gown to spread it as a counterpane over the President's bed.[14]

One does not often find in American literature the spirit of the clan so emphasized as in the Downing letters. Among all his kin Jack is a hero, as is amply illustrated by the grand caucus in Downingville when he is nominated for governor. Although his numerous relatives show a striking family resemblance, there are certain ones who stand out as distinct personalities throughout the letters. There is his country cousin Nabby, who is in a continual state of irritation: first, when Jack's delay in bargaining for her cotton cloth in Portland interferes with the posting of her marital intentions; and later when the President fails to arrive in Downingville. Sarah, his city cousin, has learned many airs in Portland, but even she rates higher the society in Downingville. She declares her cousin Jack's clothes are too shabby to wear to Washington; and family pride urges her to mend his stockings and patch his coat before he starts his journey on foot. The Yankee trader and politician are accentuated in Cousin Ephraim and Uncle Joshua. Ephraim carries on a regular traffic between Downingville and Portland and, later, Augusta, when the legislature is moved there. Uncle Joshua, with his thirty years of political experience, frequently offers his nephew sage advice, which is gratefully received.

The hero of the Downing letters has an essentially mild

[14] *Ibid.*, letter of July, 1833, but undated, pp. 206–210.

and peaceable nature, somewhat at odds with his military title. Though he shows little interest in war and bloodshed, his love of the spectacular is seen both in his political and in his military adventures: as, for instance, in his defence of Mr. Ingham, Secretary of the Treasury, who on account of a Cabinet quarrel was attacked by Major Eaton,[15] Secretary of War, and in his tactics during nullification.[16] Most of the characteristics commonly attributed to the Yankee are his: thrift, sharpness at a bargain, inventiveness, and determination to get on in the world.

His first political interests centred in his own state. The same tangles in party politics rife all over the country were in evidence there. Out of the ranks of the old Democratic Republicans, who had held sway from Jefferson's through Monroe's administrations, two coalitions had formed soon after Adams's election: the National Republicans, who changed their name in 1834 to Whigs, and the Democrats, or Jackson men. The party broils, which were violent at the time of Jackson's election, were still raging in Maine when the first Downing letter appeared, January 18, 1830; and the four political parties then in the legislature made it well nigh impossible to organize a government. The Jacksonites and the local party of Huntonites, rather troublesome offshoots of the Democratic Republicans and National Republicans, interfered with the efforts of the latter less radical parties to secure order. So Jack Downing, hitting on all sides, delineates with spirit the tug of war between these factions until it reaches its climax in the healing act of 1831, when the Jacksonites, then in power, attempting to rescind all the work of the Huntonites during the previous year, find their opponents most unwilling to have this bitter medicine forced down their throats.

[15] *Ibid.*, letter of June 21, 1831, pp. 135–138.
[16] *Ibid.*, letter of Feb. 1, 1833, pp. 186–188.

At the time of the first letters the legislature was meeting in Portland, as already mentioned, and the difficulty of electing a governor was absorbing the minds of senators and representatives. According to the Constitution such a vacancy should be filled by the President of the Senate or the Speaker of the House; but this was opposed in both Houses on account of the almost equal division of National Republicans and Democratic Republicans. A governor supplied by either party would result in the minority in the legislature of that party which elected him. Hence Jack writes of the difficulties of making a governor.

> Well, now it's got to be the first of February [he announces] and we haven't got *one* yet. And, although the governor-makers have had four or five under way for a month past, some think it very doubtful whether they will get one done so as to be fit to use this year. There's Mr. Hunton, and Mr. Smith, and Mr. Cutler, and Mr. Goodenow, and Mr. Hall, have all been *partly* made into governors; but when in all creation any one of 'em will be *finished* I guess it would puzzle a Philadelphy lawyer to tell.[17]

Four of the gentlemen mentioned did serve as governors, three performing the duties of that office within three weeks.[18] In the fall of 1830 Democratic Republicans elected Mr. Smith by a close margin.

The situation early in February made an opening for Jack Downing's first prominence in politics and for Smith's effec-

[17] *Ibid.*, letter of Feb. 1, 1830, p. 56.

[18] Mr. Cutler, President of the Senate in 1829, took the place of Governor Lincoln from his death, October 8, 1829, until February 5, 1830, when the Supreme Court decided that the President of the Senate of 1830, Joshua Hall, should have been made governor as soon as he had been elected President, and that Cutler's office had been unconstitutional since the first Wednesday in January, when the term of Governor Lincoln would have expired. Accordingly Joshua Hall was inducted into office, which he held until February 10, when the legislature declared Mr. Hunton, a National Republican, to be elected by popular vote. Information given by Mr. Kendall M. Dunbar.

tive satire on the manœuvres of office-seekers. Encouraged by the number of candidates for governor, Jack proceeded to engineer his own nomination. Among his constituents in Downingville great excitement prevailed. Uncle Joshua, confident of his nephew's success, put in his plea for a political plum.

> I think [he wrote] I could do as much good to the State by being appointed Land Agent, as any way; but I'll determine upon that when I see you.[19]

Jack's failure to carry his nomination did not daunt his spirit, however; his ambition began to soar beyond the confines of his own state. News from Washington of the resignation of the President's Cabinet started a new scheme in his head, and feeling that " Old Hickory " needed a strong supporter whom he would incidentally reward with an office and six thousand a year, he made ready for the journey. In Boston and New York he tarried in the spring of 1831 to curry favor with newspaper editors, all of whom interpreted differently the meaning of true Republicanism, but were at the same time so convinced of his loyalty to the cause that they " boosted " him on his way with letters of recommendation to the President.

Jack had moments of wavering.

> This running after offices is pretty tuff work for poor folks [he wrote back home]. Sometimes I think there aint much profit in it after all, any more than there is in buying lottery tickets, where you pay a dollar and sometimes get four shillings back, and sometimes nothing.[20]

His patience was, in fact, pretty well exhausted before the President gave him a captain's commission and delegated to him the duty of quieting disturbances on the Northeast

[19] *The Life and Writings of Major Jack Downing,* 1833, letter of July 19, 1830, p. 94. [20] *Ibid.,* letter of May 4, 1831, p. 128.

border.[21] By the time his military services were again required and rewarded by a Major's commission,[22] he was on friendly and intimate terms with "Old Hickory."

This was a particularly happy time for a rustic character to assume the guise of hero and of confidant to the chief executive of the United States. Jackson had come into office in 1828 amidst the shouts of the multitude. The first President really demanded by the mass of the people, he had the dignity and unyielding nature of one born to rule. No one could on occasions be more obstinate than he. English travelers in America marvelled at the power he wielded and prophesied a weakening of the reins of government in the hands of his successors. The eight years he was in office were inevitably stormy ones which lent themselves readily to caricature and humorous treatment by friends or enemies of the administration.

Jack Downing's relations with the old General are, for the most part, those of a staunch admirer, whose heart warms to the tasks allotted to him when his sympathies are stirred,[23] whose ear is always open to the confidences of the President,[24] and whose words of counsel at times soften the arbitrary spirit of "Old Hickory."[25] In the summer of 1832 when they are together in Tennessee, the Major hears detailed accounts of the President's difficulties with his Kitchen Cabinet, the announcement of Van Buren's fitness to be his successor in the executive chair, and his objections to Clay and Calhoun as candidates for President.

[21] *Ibid.*, letter of Oct. 20, 1831, pp. 140–144.

[22] *Ibid.*, letter of Dec. 8, 1832, pp. 172–175.

[23] *Ibid.*, letter of Oct. 20, 1831, *Jack Receives a Captain's Commission from the President*, pp. 140–144.

[24] *Ibid.*, 3rd ed., 1834, letter of Oct. 20, 1832, *A Confidential Talk with the President*, pp. 164–168.

[25] *Ibid.*, letter of Dec. 28, 1833, *The Major Prevents a Bobbery in the Senate*, pp. 254–260.

There's Clay [Jackson confides], he would make pretty work of it, if he should come in. Why, Jack, he would gamble one-half of the country away in two years, and spend the other half in digging Canals and building railroads; and when the funds in the Treasury failed, he would go to the United States Bank and get more.

Calhoun would break the Union to pieces in three months if he was President. He's trying all he can now to tear off something of a slice from it at the South.[26]

During the President's trip through New England[27] in the spring of 1833 Jack Downing's intimacy with his chief is still more striking. When at Harvard Jackson is anticipating the ceremony of making himself Doctor of Laws, he discloses to his confidant his embarrassment:

Major, I feel a little kind of streaked about it after all; for they say they will go to talking to me in Latin, and although I studied it a little once, I dont know any more about it now than the man in the moon. And how I can get along in that case, I dont know. I told him my way, when anybody talked to me in a lingo that I didn't understand, was jest to say nothing, but look as knowing as any of 'em, and then they generally thought I knew a pesky sight more than any of 'em. At that the Gineral fetched me a slap on my shoulder, and haw-hawed right out. Says he, Major Downing, you are the boy for me; I don't know how I should get along in this world if it wasn't for you.[28]

At such marked partiality for the Major on the tour Down East Van Buren shows much discomfiture and presently

[26] *Ibid.*, letter of Oct. 20, 1832, p. 168.

[27] Josiah Quincy's *Figures of the Past,* (Boston, 1892), which gives a detailed account of this journey, caricatured by Seba Smith, refers (p. 359) to Jackson's great delight, while confined to his bed by illness, in reading the narratives of Jack Downing, "the Mark Twain of the period." Mr. Quincy is, in fact, mentioned twice by the Major as one of the Presidential party.

[28] *The Life and Writings of Major Jack Downing,* 1833, letter of July 2, 1833, pp. 212–213.

starts a quarrel with Jack, which so annoys the President that he abandons his proposed journey to Downingville and orders a speedy return to the Capital. The vividness with which Jackson and other political leaders are sketched is one of the reasons for opening the pages of the Downing letters today.[29] Another feature of interest is the skill with which situations developing during Jackson's administration are satirized. In his use of parody Seba Smith has drawn upon homely rustic life and has colored humorously the motives influencing affairs in the social and political world.

One of the cleverest letters of the first series is a parody on the position of Mrs. Eaton, wife of the Secretary of War. She had been Peggy O'Neal, a barkeeper's daughter, was fearless and unconventional in her ways, and had inimitable wit. It was not surprising, then, that her reputation was questioned by many Washington ladies, and that they refused to give her social recognition.[30] Jackson's attempts to stifle the scandal by his own graciousness to Mrs. Eaton resulted in wrangling among the members of the Cabinet and finally in the voluntary or forced resignation of all. Ephraim's satirical epistle on the mortifying situation of Mrs. No-Tea is suggested by this complication, and also gives better than any other single letter, a picture of social life in Downingville:

Dear Cousin Jack —

Your uncle Joshua has been turned out of General Combs' employ only jest because your cousin Nabby, Mrs. Inkhorn, and Mrs. Thimblebury, and a few other of the topping-folks, wouldn't invite

[29] Reference to Webster in *The Life and Writings of Major Jack Downing*, 1833, letters of Sept. 14 and 30, 1833, pp. 223–230.

[30] Cf. Meade Minnigerode, *Some American Ladies*, N. Y., 1926, pp. 243–287, and James Parton, *Life of Andrew Jackson*, N. Y., 1860, pp. 186–203.

poor Mrs. No-Tea to their husking and quilting parties. I had a long talk with the General t'other day — he was hopping mad, and declared he would turn every man and woman off his farm and out of his mills rather than that good woman should be treated in the manner she had been. She was as good as the best of 'em any day, and he could prove it. He didn't care so much about her going to their afternoon visits when they went sociable without stays, and took their knitting work and got home again before milking time; but when there was a grand husking or quilting, he thought it pesky hard and lonely for her to stay at home, while everybody else in Downingville was trying the double shuffle and the cutting out jigg. I think so too, but I told the General it was no use for him to make such a fuss about it; that he had better attack old Ticonderogue in front and rear than undertake to make women haw or gee if they want a mind to — they always would have their own way in spite of everybody. . . .[31]

Nullification is parodied picturesquely in the Major's story of Bill Johnson's disaster when in logging time he persisted in cutting the lashings, taking his log, and paddling off alone:

"And now, Gineral, this is jest what I think: if you let South Carolina cut the lashings you'll see such a log-rolling in this country as you never see yet." The old Gineral started up and marched across the floor like a boy. Says he, "Major Downing, she shan't cut the lashings while my name is Andrew Jackson."[32]

Punning is another well-worn device by which Seba Smith produced his comic effects. In allowing his Down East characters to confuse terms employed in political and financial affairs with expressions used in rustic life, he made much of his fun, and the Yankee's unconsciousness of any error on his part increases the humor of the situation. Uncle Joshua's remarks on stock at a political dinner illustrate this method:

[31] *The Life and Writings of Major Jack Downing,* 1833, letter of 1831, but undated, p. 138.

[32] *Ibid.,* letter of Jan. 17, 1833, p. 183.

There was considerable talk about stock and manufactories, and lierbilities and rimidies, and a great loss on stock. I thought this a good chance for me to put in a word, for I calculated I knew as much about raising stock and keeping it over as any of 'em. Says I to Mr. —— there's one thing I've always observed in my experience in stock — just as sure as you try to keep over more stock than you have fodder to carry them well into Aperil, one half will die on your hands to a sartinty, and there's no rimidy for it; I've tried it out and out, and there's no law that can make a tun of hay keep over ten cows, unless you have more carrots and potatoes than you can throw a stick at. This made some of the folks stare who didn't know much about stock, and Steeve give me a jog, as much as to say, keep quiet.[33]

Twice in the first series of the Downing letters the author sidesteps into verse;[34] and in one instance points to Sam Patch, a contemporary character of some note, whose ability to leap the highest falls is referred to more than once by writers of the period.[35] Seba Smith shows that there are striking parallels between the life of the jumping hero and that of Major Downing. As Sam started his career by taking small jumps, so Jack began his by reaching after small offices; and as the former would stop at nothing short of Niagara, so the Major was not content until he had tried

[33] *Ibid.*, letter of Jan. 25, 1830, pp. 50–51.

[34] One of these contributions, *A Tax on Bachelors*, has been by mistake attributed to Margaret M. Davidson in Griswold's *Female Poets of America.*

[35] Patch was mentioned as one of the wonders of the day in Mrs. Trollope's book on America, and was celebrated in verse by the contemporary poets Thomas Ward and Robert C. Sands. See Mrs. Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, London, 1832, pp. 219, 220; Thomas Ward, *The Great Descender*, in *Passaic and Other Poems*, N. Y., 1842, pp. 17–41; and Robert C. Sands, *Monody on Sam Patch*, in Griswold's *Poets and Poetry of America*, N. Y., 1842, pp. 212–214. William Dean Howells also makes extended reference to Patch in *Their Wedding Journey*, Boston, 1886, pp. 106–113. Danforth Marble, a Yankee actor associated with Logan, began his career in Buffalo, 1826, with his version of Sam Patch.

for the Presidency. Except for this comparison the introduction in verse of Sam Patch's exploits seems hardly in keeping with the purpose of the Downing letters. Even the Yankee dialect disappears in the doggerel rhyme setting forth this leaping prodigy. When the ambition of the hero is questioned, he replies in lines which have often been quoted:

> "What for?" inquired an honest Hodge,
> "Why scare to death our wives and mothers?"
> "To show that some things can be done,"
> Quoth Sam, "as well as others."[36]

No more is heard of Jack's aspirations for the Presidency after the publication, in 1833, of *The Life and Writings of Major Jack Downing,* hastened, no doubt, by the numerous counterfeit letters flooding the market. The continued activities of a rival Downing, which will be treated in a later chapter, seem to have interfered to some extent with Smith's purposes, but his first book established beyond question his reputation for fun-making in political satire. He had created a canny Yankee fitted by native shrewdness and knowledge of practical affairs to play with intelligence the quaintly humorous part of confidant to the chief executive of the United States. While Jack Downing assumes various rôles in fugitive letters, it is in his character of homely counsellor to "Old Hickory" that he remains a significant figure in the history of American humor.[37]

Seba Smith's next enterprise under the signature of the Major was the editing of the *Downing Gazette,* a weekly paper devoted to political matters, but not lacking the rustic

[36] *The Life and Writings of Major Jack Downing,* 1833, p. 239.

[37] This rôle was played more exclusively by J. Downing, Major (C. A. Davis); hence the reputation of the original Major was overshadowed by his successor.

flavor of the early letters.[38] Timothy Jones, whose name often appears in the columns of the paper, sends Yankee material from Whortleberry on rustic speech and manners. The *New York Courier* said of the *Gazette* that "it showed true Yankeeism, the raal stuff, just as would come warm from an unsophisticated son of the pumpkin field."[39] This quality doubtless attracted some of the numerous subscribers from Georgia, who were chuckling at the same time over the racy sketches in Longstreet's *Georgia Scenes,* where horse jockeys, card sharpers, and other eccentric figures familiar in the South were treated with an amount of burlesque which did not veil their native character; for they belonged to the same race at least as the shrewd and calculating Major and his hangers-on in Downingville.

Jack's letters in the *Downing Gazette* differ from the first series in their severe criticism of Jackson.[40] Like the Texan, David Crockett, the New York editors, Major Noah and Colonel Webb, and others who had once been strong supporters of Jackson, Smith was unable to endorse the President's financial policy or his increasingly arbitrary rule. It is obstinacy, the Major says, which makes the General so insistent regarding French claims. The latter's skating episode

[38] In *My Thirty Years Out of the Senate,* Seba Smith inserts between the first and second series of letters the statement that, owing to the loss of certain letters by fire, there would be a gap in history, which he would have to bridge by jumping from "Old Hickory" to "Young Hickory." This weekly, commenced July 4, 1834, contains many of these supposedly missing letters.

[39] Reprinted in the *Downing Gazette,* Sept. 26, 1834.

[40] Henry Clay evidently considered Seba Smith's political satire would be effective in turning the country against Jackson, for in a letter of Aug. 9, 1834, Clay wrote Smith, "I am happy to tell you that the Jackson party has been completely annihilated at our elections in Kentucky which have just terminated. . . . It remains to be seen whether Maine, New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio will continue to inflict the curse upon us." In library of M. H. S.

with Sergeant Joel, who has taken the Major's place temporarily as reporter from Washington, is an interesting parody of the situation.[41] "Old Hickory" and his companion leave wine and overcoats on sleds near the shore of the river while they launch out for a skate. In the meantime a dozen large fellows come up and drink their wine, whereat the General demands pay or reprisal. As he and the Sergeant are greatly outnumbered, they come to grief and lose even more of their property; so that the General has to qualify his reiterated principle, "I never will submit to anything that is wrong," by the clause, "when I can help it."

From February to June, 1835, correspondence between the Major and Colonel Crockett was published in the *Gazette*. The Major had already referred to Crockett in his first series of letters, when "candidating" for President, and was told by the Colonel to go ahead. Now, in a letter published in Crockett's *Tour to the North and Down East* as well as in the *Downing Gazette*, Jack Downing asks his friend to write regularly for the paper.

> You being away off there in the western country [the Major says] and I here away down east, who knows, if we should put our heads together, how much we could do towards keeping the government straight and making things go well.[42]

He wants more than information on political matters and hopes Crockett will tell about the great prairies and how they live in the West. The Colonel's answers to the Major's letters seem self-conscious and lack the spontaneity and raciness of the *Autobiography* and the *Tour to the North and Down East*.[43] He says little about the West except in a po-

[41] *Downing Gazette*, Jan. 17, 1835, letter of Jan. 10.

[42] *Ibid.*, Feb. 28, 1835, letter of Feb. 26.

[43] Crockett's authorship of these books has been disputed, but the latest evidence indicates that the works bearing his name were revised and corrected by Augustin Smith Clayton, who may also have

litical connection, and ridicules Jackson's determination to make Van Buren his successor.

President Jackson [he says] has willed the people to little Van in his letter to Parson Gwin of Nashville. This act of President Jackson has raised more excitement in Tennessee than any act of his life. I think he has barked up the wrong tree this time. The people of Tennessee are not transferable at his will — and him and his little pet will find it out at the proper time.[44]

Major Downing adds his satirical comments on Van Buren to the many published throughout the country. For instance, he remarks of him, " He always has some kind of an undertow working round and round, and you never can tell which way he is sailing." One of the best pictures of Van Buren in the Downing letters shows his attempt to climb up to a high stable window to prove that a thief might have left the General's bedroom in that way. Mr. Blair, editor of *The Globe*, the organ of the government under Jackson's administration, and Sergeant Joel attempted it, but were unsuccessful. Then came Van Buren's turn.

So he stript off his coat, and pulled off his boots and hat, and spit on his hands, and begun to climb. And by jings, he was the slickest climer that ever I did see. You couldn't see how he held on, nor what he took hold on with his hands, nor nothin'. But somehow or other he worked along as still as a mouse, and kept gaining up, hitch after hitch, till he got up within about a foot of the window, and we thought he was jest about ready to take hold of it, when all to once he slipt and down he came. But it didn't discomboborate him a hair. He turned right round to the Gineral as calm as a moonshine, and says he, " Gineral, it wouldn't prove anything if I should get up to the window, and I guess we may as well let it alone." [45]

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assisted in Crockett's correspondence to the *Downing Gazette* (correspondence of Alexander Dienst, Temple, Texas, with Professor J. D. Wade, University of Georgia, seen by courtesy of Dr. Carl Van Doren).

[44] *Downing Gazette,* May 23, 1835, letter of Apr. 20.

[45] *Ibid.,* May 2, 1835, letter of Apr. 25.

The *Downing Gazette* seems to have been discontinued in the spring of 1836.[46] The next series of political letters by Seba Smith, with the pseudonym John Smith, probably because of his numerous imitators, should not be omitted from this discussion, as in style and content these do not differ materially from the Downing correspondence.[47] The subject now dealt with was the Aroostook War. Bannister's play, *The Maine Question,* which was put on at the Franklin Theatre in New York, February 19, 1839, had already helped to kindle interest in this situation.[48] The editor of the *New York Mirror,* in which these letters were first published, beginning February 23, 1839, said of them, "These are the most graphic and really the best Yankee papers we have ever seen or expect to see, let who will write them. . . . We believe the author to be one of the cleverest men of the day."[49] Certainly the account of the draft in Smithville is one of the most spirited of Seba Smith's Yankee letters.[50] Never was there a more ingenious method of drafting than this. As there were eighty in the company and twenty to be chosen, sixty white beans and twenty black were put in a bowl from which the sergeant was to draw as he called the names. There was Peter Livermore, who everyone knew was cowardly and who was ready to brag just as soon as he learned that a white bean had been drawn with his name.

[46] Last copy available is dated Mar. 28, 1835, but letters of Mar. 22, 1836, indicating that the Downing correspondence was temporarily closed, were published in the *Portland Courier and Family Reader* for Apr. 1, 1836.

[47] Printed as book, *John Smith's Letters with Picters to Match,* N. Y., 1839.

[48] A. H. Quinn, *A History of American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War,* New York and London, 1923, p. 284.

[49] *New York Mirror,* Mar. 23, 1839.

[50] *Ibid.,* letter of Mar. 8, 1839, incorporated with change of names in *My Thirty Years Out of the Senate,* pp. 134–147.

I swow [he said] I thought I should a been drafted, and I almost wish I had. It would have been fun alive to a gone down there, and had a brush 'long with them are New Brumzickers. My old fowling-piece would a made daylight shine through fifty of 'em in half an hour's fighting. I swow I'm disappinted — I was in hopes I should have been drafted.

Later when he was called to take the place of a coward who made no pretensions of bravery, it was a different story.

But captain, [said he] . . . it seems to me like presumption to go throwing myself into danger, when it wasn't my lot to go. I shouldn't like to go, Captain, without I was drafted.

Young John Smith is a contrast to Peter in the patriotic fire he shows. When a call came for a volunteer, his father writes:

My son John sprung like a young tiger, and seized Jerry's gun, and jumped into the middle of the floor and stood up by the side of Sargent Johnson, and shouldered his gun with so much eagerness, and looked so fierce and determined, although nothing but a striplin' of a boy, that the whole company burst out in three tremendous cheers for John Smith, the tenth.

In the picturing of the whole campaign there is a zest not so evenly maintained in earlier or later letters. Among the many humorous touches there is the delineation of the unfortunate Billy Wiggins, whose gun is always going off too soon and who embarrasses the company when firing a salute in front of the State House. After a night's rest in one of the lobbies of the Capitol, the company march on to the disputed territory in the heart of the timberlands, where the Major ejaculates:

And my stars! sich great whapping pine trees, as straight as a candle, and tall as a liberty pole, and standing all round as thick as the beanpoles in our garden, I guess you never see.[51]

[51] *New York Mirror,* Apr. 6, 1839, letter of Mar. 20.

When Jack gives the plan for surrounding a log cabin where a crew of British plunderers are stationed, the campaign becomes more spectacular. This situation reminds one of *The Militia Company Drill,* included in Longstreet's *Georgia Scenes;* [52] here the Captain wishes to appear very competent, but makes as many mistakes as his men, with whom he is most impatient. It is the exaggeration of the Major's military efficiency which increases the humor of this episode in the Smith letters.

> Now we must creep up as still as midnight [he urges] so that they shan't see nor hear us, and when we've surrounded the cabin, I'll give a little bit of a low whistle, — and in a moment, two of you must poke your guns right into them windows, and I'll step right into the middle of the door with my sword in one hand and my gun in t'other, and two more of you must spring right behind me and poke your guns in over my shoulders, one over my right shoulder and t'other over my left shoulder; and the rest of you must stand off all ready to fire as a core deserve, about two rods from the camp.[53]

Capitulation follows with no bloodshed, and after floundering about in the snow to find the boundary line, the company discover tracks which they jokingly call the British lion's. These they investigate until they trap a great moose which they carry home alive as a trophy of the war. Upon their return to Smithville they are regaled at the village tavern, where a real Down East dinner is served.

It seems unfortunate that these letters were not fathered by Major Jack Downing, as they are unique in covering an interesting bit of history not particularly well known, and show Seba Smith's special talent in setting forth rustic scenes and characters of his native state.

Between the letters of John Smith and the last series by

[52] This sketch was written by Longstreet's friend, Mr. Prince.

[53] *New York Mirror,* Apr. 6, 1839, letter of Mar. 20.

Jack Downing, published in 1859, occasional letters by the Major were printed in New York magazines: in *The New World, The Rover,* and *Bunker Hill,* the last two being edited by Seba Smith. Letters in *The Rover* were most numerous in 1844, when Jack wrote from his native village, Downingville. There he was busy selling cheap literature, but did not neglect to say his word on Presidential candidates.[54] No copies of *Bunker Hill* have been available, but we know that in the letters written for it, which were for the most part reprinted in *The Rover,* the Major discussed various methods of city improvement, the wonders of a city system, modern inventions, and native Americanism. He is delighted at Mayor Harper's measures in removing the grog shops from the city park on the Fourth of July and substituting a fountain; he marvels how all New York could drink through a pipe from a pond forty miles away just like sucking cider from a barrel; he describes the railroad tunnel just built and Morse's talking machine; and finally he emphasizes the need of making new immigration laws unless the country is to be ruled by foreigners.

In *My Thirty Years Out of the Senate,* appearing in 1859, Seba Smith reprinted what he considered the best of the Downing letters already published in book form, and added his last series, previously circulated in the *National Intelligencer;* this began in the newspaper on July 2, 1847, and ended January 26, 1856.[55] The letters written during the Mexican War offer some interesting parallels to *The Biglow Papers,* which first came out in the *Boston Daily Courier,* June 17, 1846, a year before the Downing letters recom-

[54] *The Rover,* Vol. III, No. 1, p. 13.

[55] Two of these letters, one for July 23, 1849, called *A Voice from Salt River* and one on Nov. 7, 1854, describing a July banquet in London, were omitted in the book, but with the exception of some slight condensation and changes in order, the correspondence was printed practically as it had appeared in the newspaper.

menced. Lowell, however, concentrates on the principles opposing the war and the lack of earnestness throughout the country, while Smith, as in his first series, concerns himself more with personalities and action. On the questions of Polk's Presidential efficiency, his policy of annexation, the lack of sincerity in office-seekers, and the candidacy of Taylor, Smith and Lowell show similar views, but the sharp satire of *The Biglow Papers* is conspicuously absent from the Downing letters, which proceed evenly in the mood of comic enjoyment. In dealing with topics of the day, Seba Smith's shrewd irony rarely failed to reveal his own opinions; yet his humor is more like that of *Punch,* in which political affairs are treated impartially with little attempt at moral suasion, than like that of Lowell, who was strongly biassed by sectional feeling and believed that "true humor is never divorced from moral conviction." [56]

In the guise of Polk's confidential emissary, Jack Downing is sent to the war zone to report on military affairs; these he discusses with related topics in letters directed to Gales and Seaton, managers of the *National Intelligencer* and hostile to the Administration. The President's suspicions he pretends to allay with the most skilful diplomacy by addressing part of his letters to him as private despatches. In fulfilling the mission of reporter from the battlefields the Major naturally has much to say of definite engagements and of leading figures in the war. "Santa Anna," he writes, "is as slippery as an eel, and has as many lives as a cat." [57] His burlesque account of Scott's trial,[58] brought on by the complaints of General Pillow and General Worth, unmasks Pillow, the real miscreant. He remon-

[56] *The Biglow Papers,* second series, 1867. Preface, p. 7.

[57] *My Thirty Years Out of the Senate,* 1859, special despatch to Polk added to letter of Sept. 27, 1847, p. 276.

[58] *Ibid.,* "Dockyment" added to letter of Mar. 22, 1848, p. 304.

strates with Trist for dallying with the treaty after he has been called home, but advises Polk to ratify it and take all the glory of the war upon himself that he may win his second election. The triumphs of Scott and Taylor, however, he recognizes are in the way of the President's victory.

The Major's letters reflect the criticism of Polk and his war policy voiced throughout the nation. It seemed to be the consensus of opinion that he desired war for personal glory, to increase the power of his party, to secure California, and to be reëlected, but authentic records have proved these accusations to be unfounded.[59] Though Polk was undoubtedly too small a man for national leadership during this critical period, it is also true that he suffered injustice at the hands of many enemies.

Jack Downing's ridicule of Polk is an illustration of popular feeling. In spite of the apparent plausibility with which the Major defends to Polk his relations with the *National Intelligencer,* there is no mistaking his purpose when he exhibits the President's conceit in wanting all the glory of the war himself, and in asserting that no greater honors had been accorded any other President by his countrymen. Having indicated the President's vanity, the Major then ironically insists that if he conquers and annexes the republic of Mexico, his name will live longer than Washington's.[60]

> Some think [he writes earlier] the business isn't profitable; but it's only because they haven't ciphered into it fur enough to understand it. Upon an average, we get at least ten to one for our

[59] J. R. Smith, *The History of the Mexican War,* N. Y., 1919, pp. 128–134.

[60] This letter was dated Dec. 30, 1847. In the fourth *Biglow Paper,* printed two days earlier, Lowell's reference to the Democrats indicates that such a comparison was made more than once by Polk's party:

> Half o' whom they've persuaded by way of a joke
> Thet Washington's mantelpiece fell upon Polk.

outlay, any way you can figure it up — I mean in the matter of people. Take, for instance, the City of Mexico. It cost us only two or three thousand men to annex it, after we got into the neighborhood of it; and we get at least one hundred and fifty thousand in that city, and some put it down as high as two hundred thousand. Some find fault with the quality of the people we get in this country, jest as if that had anything to do with the merits of the case. They ought to remember that in a Government like ours, where the people is used for voting, and where every nose counts one, it is the number that we are to stan' about in annexin' and not the quality, by no means. So that in the matter of people we are doing a grand business. And as to the money, it is no matter what it costs us, for money grows in the ground in Mexico, and can always be had for the digging.[61]

Later he dreams that the whole country, having annexed all North and South America, has turned into a monstrous ship of war and set sail for further conquests in Europe, Asia, and Africa. He hears Polk, the captain, sing out, "Don't stop for birds'-egging round among the West India Islands; we can pick them up as we come back along."[62]

Beneath the absurdity of the Major's words there is a very definite criticism of Polk and his policy, but Jack Downing was too placid to make a very deep impression during the tempestuous years of the Mexican War. A fiery zealot like Hosea Biglow could strengthen the feeling that the South was mainly responsible for the war with his

> Wal, go 'long to help 'em stealin'
> Bigger pens to cram with slaves.[63]

Jack Downing's discussion of the war, however, shows a less prejudiced point of view, for he never intimates that the

[61] *My Thirty Years Out of the Senate,* letter of Sept. 27, 1847, pp. 275–276.

[62] *Ibid.,* letter of Oct. 25, 1847, p. 281.

[63] *The Biglow Papers,* No. I, first series.

slave states should be held accountable for what seemed to him a national wrong.

Like Lowell, Seba Smith emphasizes lack of principles in candidates for office. The closest parallel in the two satires is in the treatment of General Caleb Cushing, to whom both Jack Downing and Hosea Biglow refer as candidate for governor in the old Bay State.[64] In a Downing letter of October 25, 1847, the Major remarks of him:

> What amazed him so much was that he'd always been thinking all along that he was a Whig, till the nomination come, and then he jumped up and snapped his fingers, and said he believed, after all, the Democrats was the right party. He's in great sperits and says he's no doubt he shall be elected. He goes for annexin' now the hottest of any of us, and says he takes the great Alexander for his model, and goes for annexin' as long as there is any country left to annex.[65]

Hosea Biglow's ridicule of Gineral C. in the poem dated November 2, 1847, is very similar:

> Gineral C. is a dreffle smart man:
> He's ben on all sides thet give places or pelf;
> But consistency still wuz a part of his plan, —
> He's ben true to *one* party, — an' thet is himself; —
> So John P.
> Robinson he
> Sez he shall vote fer Gineral C.[66]

[64] There are many references by Lowell to the conduct and utterances of Caleb Cushing, whose reputation, according to Mr. Fuess, his recent biographer, has suffered on account of *The Biglow Papers.* Mr. Fuess declares that General Cushing was more loyal to his country than to the Whigs, and gives evidence that his change of party came only after careful deliberation. Claude M. Fuess, *The Life of Caleb Cushing,* N. Y., 1923, Vol. II, pp. 67–73.

[65] *My Thirty Years Out of the Senate,* letter of Oct. 25, 1847, p. 285.

[66] *The Biglow Papers,* No. III, first series.

When Polk is out of the running for President, the Major stumps the country for the Democratic party and General Cass, but, like Birdofredum Sawin in *The Biglow Papers,* who volunteers to fight for Mexico, Jack finds everyone — Whigs and Democrats alike — hooraying for "Old Rough and Ready." His protest in a letter dated June 30, 1848, voices much the same sentiment expressed by Birdofredum Sawin three months later.

Ye see [the Major writes Polk] the Whigs have put up Taylor for President; and it has completely knocked us all into a cocked hat. There isn't one half of us knows where we stan' or which way we are goin'; and there isn't a party fence in the country that is high enough to keep our folks from jumping over. . . . But the conduct of the Whigs has been shameful in this business. Instead of taking a man that fairly belonged to 'em they have grabbed hold of a man that got all his popularity out of our war, and was under the pay of our Administration, and has been made and built up by our party, and the Whigs had no more business with him than they had with the man in the moon.[67]

Birdofredum accepts the situation more calmly:

I've ben a votin' Demmercrat, ez reg'lar as a clock,
But don't find goin' Taylor gives my narves no gret 'f a shock;
Truth is, the cutest leadin' Wigs, ever sence fust they found
Wich side the bread gut buttered on, hev kep a edgin round;
They kin' o' slipt the planks frum out th' ole platform one by one
An' made it gradooally noo, 'fore folks know'd wut wuz done,
Till, fur'z I know, there aint an inch thet I could lay my han' on.[68]

After the victory of the Whigs the Major follows his Democratic friends to the head of Salt River, an imaginary stream, but evidently suggested by a river in Kentucky of the same name, which on account of its windings and turn-

[67] *My Thirty Years Out of the Senate,* letter of June 30, 1848, p. 306.

[68] *The Biglow Papers,* No. IX, first series.

ings is difficult to navigate. The name had already been connected with Presidential campaigns, for the legend was circulated that Henry Clay lost his appointment to speak as candidate in Louisville, in 1832, because his political opponent rowed him up the Salt River instead of the Ohio.[69] In the stream he calls Salt River, Seba Smith has presented new obstacles to navigation which were suggested by the tidal waters in Maine. As the Democrats are borne up the stream by the current, they meet the Whigs coming down in gay spirits with the tide, but pulling their boats along close by the shore to keep out of the main current.[70]

Uncle Joshua, a moving spirit in the Salt River territory to which the Democrats are relegated, having been elected as representative to Washington, tells his constituents a story to show the folly of putting up a high fence along Mason and Dixon's line or attempting to divide North and South. This is one of the best in the last series of Downing letters, and like Lowell's poem, *Leaving the Matter Open*,[71] illustrates the use of parody. As Lowell's poem was written more than a year before this Downing letter, which is dated October 25, 1849, it appears that Seba Smith may have taken some suggestions from it. In both cases a farmer, Uncle Sam by name, had left his property in common to two brothers, called by Lowell Farmer North and Farmer South, by Seba Smith, Jonathan and John. The main themes of these satires are different, however, as Lowell is dealing with the question of slavery or freedom in the territory acquired in the Mexican War, and Seba Smith with the

[69] This is given as a fact in Hyamson's *Dictionary of English Phrases;* but it is stated in Roger's *The True Henry Clay,* (Phila., 1904, p. 192) that Clay did not make campaign speeches in 1832.

[70] *My Thirty Years Out of the Senate,* letter of Dec. 18, 1848, p. 316.

[71] *Lowell's Complete Poetical Works,* Cambridge Edition, 1896, introduction to first series of *The Biglow Papers,* pp. 176–178.

question of union or disunion. The bone of contention between Jonathan and John is represented as the thistles which John persisted in growing on his land. "He was sure they gave a higher character and dignity to his family, for they was a sign to everybody that passed along the road that the family lived on a good rich farm that supported 'em without their having to work for it."[72] This is almost the only instance where Seba Smith alludes to slavery — one of the burning topics of Lowell's *Biglow Papers*. Uncle Joshua picturesquely designates the Mexicans and California as the Silverbuckles and the gold-apple field, and forecasts the troubles which might have occurred in case of disunion.

The Major, pacific and gentle of soul, was first of all a Union man and made Uncle Joshua his mouthpiece when the old gentleman urged getting up a new party that should surround all other parties — "an out and out national party, a party that would stand up to the rack, fodder or no fodder — and go for the Union, the whole Union, and nothing but the Union, live or die!"[73]

Hosea Biglow was for disunion rather than compromise, which he believed was the only alternative.

> Ef I'd *my* way I hed ruther,
> We should go to work an part,
> They take one way, we take t'other,
> Guess it wouldn't break my heart;
> Men hed ough' to put asunder
> Them thet God has noways jined;
> An I shouldn't gretly wonder
> Ef there's thousands o' my mind.[74]

This was the opinion of a young man urged by his feelings to precipitate action before his cooler judgment had pointed

[72] *My Thirty Years Out of the Senate,* letter of Oct. 25, 1849, p. 327.

[73] *Ibid.,* letter of Nov. 10, 1851, p. 341.

[74] *The Biglow Papers,* No. I, first series.

a wiser course. Thoughtful readers would find more magnanimity and wisdom in the words of Seba Smith. It is perhaps unjust to criticize too severely the sentiments of a poetic production thrown off in the heat of indignation against a generally recognized wrong. Only genius could have caught the spirit of the time in words which, for the most part, have not lost their point or force. But in justice to the humble predecessor of Hosea Biglow, we must allow the Major a certain far-sightedness and statesmanship lacking to the scornful and passionate Hosea.

After the Mexican War the Major gave his attention in turn to Kossuth's visit to America,[75] to the Presidential campaign for Pierce,[76] and to the Ostend Manifesto Congress.[77] To the Hungarian general, who is asking America to aid his people in their struggle for independence, Jack writes a letter of sympathy, which he ends with a promise of substantial assistance from all the Downingville folks. Cousin Nabby will knit stockings, Aunt Keziah and Uncle Joshua will send money secured from the sale of cheeses and two three-year old steers, and Sargent Joel declares he will give his old rifle and carry it to Hungary himself.

Among the most picturesque of the last letters is his description of the Democratic Presidential Convention in Baltimore when Pierce was nominated. The manœuvres of state delegations in organizing reminded Jack of driving ox-teams Down East. There was much pulling and tugging and back-sliding among supporters of candidates, and it seemed impossible to get Cass, Buchanan, or any of the Old Fogy teams up the hill to nomination for President; hence the Major writes:

[75] *My Thirty Years Out of the Senate,* letter of Dec. 22, 1851, pp. 349–356.

[76] *Ibid.,* letters of June 5, July 20, and Sept. 18, 1852, pp. 376–398.

[77] *Ibid.,* letters of Oct. 28, 1854, and Mar., 1855, pp. 419–436.

We begun to look around to see how Young America was getting along.

The Douglas team was made up mostly of young steers; and it was a pretty smart team, well trained, and pulled well. But it wasn't equal to the Old Fogies for a heavy pull; it hadn't so much bone, and sinew, and wind, and bottom. Howsomever, it made a pretty good scratch of it and kept gaining gradually up the hill; so we thought we would take hold and give Young America a boost, and see if we couldn't get a candidate that way.[78]

The Franklin Pierce team, started by Virginia alone, was finally the only one that could draw all factions to the top. The feeling of the time in regard to the nomination of Franklin Pierce is echoed in Uncle Joshua's question, "Major, who is General Pierce? It ain't a fictious name, is it?"[79] When persuaded of the reality of the candidate for the Democratic party, Uncle Joshua makes strenuous efforts to find some incident in Pierce's military career to use in booming the campaign.

In the hurry and scurry of his own national life, Jack finds enough to talk about, but he keeps his ears open for rumors of entanglements abroad. His report of the Ostend Congress opens the way for speculations on European affairs. Shrewdly prophesying the complications which resulted in the Crimean War, he draws a comic picture of the relations between Russia and Turkey in a letter of November 8, 1853:

About this war business in Europe [he writes], if there's anything to be larnt in diplomatic circles, and I've sifted the whole of 'em, there's to be a tight scratch all round before it is over. The truth is, Russia is in real arnest after Turkey as ever a bear was to get into a corn-field. She clambered over into the field, like a great bear as she is, jest for the purpose of eating her way through from one end to t'other. But she intended to do it all in a peaceable, friendly way, marching coolly and slowly along, step by step,

[78] *Ibid.*, letter of June 5, 1852, p. 381.

[79] *Ibid.*, letter of July 20, 1852, p. 384.

till she got down to the lower end of the field, and then she would swallow Constantinople just as quick as a cat could lick her ear, and poor Turkey never would know what become of her. The Czar intended to do all this in a very friendly, quiet way, nibbling along at his leisure, and not have any fuss at all about it. But the foolish Sultan got frightened, and worked himself into a tantrum, and declared war, and told Mr. Bear to clear out of his corn-field in fifteen days, or he'd set the dogs arter him. Well, that made the Czar mad; and now he says clear the track, for he's agoing down to Constantinople, whether or no, let who will stand in the way, and there shan't be a Turk's head left anywhere, clear from Dan to Beersheba — that is, if the other nations will jest form a ring and see fair play, and not interfere.[80]

The ambitions and rivalries of European nations lead Jack to the ironic conclusion that we should "carry out our manifest destiny in a handsome manner."[81] In the early fifties the annexation of Cuba was a popular demand which the Major presents in high colors, taking occasion to satirize a democracy in which "might should be the rule of right." Obeying the injunctions of the Ostend Manifesto, which Secretary Marcy repudiated, Jack Downing's little ship, *The Two Pollies,* scuds on its way toward Cuba, ready with other filibusters to wrest from Spain by force what she will not sell at a fair price.[82]

Major Jack Downing's last appearance in print seems to have been in his volume *My Thirty Years Out of the Senate.* He ended his correspondence as he began it in 1830, with a spectacular picture of legislative and political tangles. Then the question at issue was electing the Speaker in the House of the state legislature; now Jack visits the House of Representatives in Washington and finds again a general uproar because of the same difficulty of choosing a Speaker. He at length quiets Pierce's apprehensions on account of six weeks'

[80] *Ibid.,* letter of Nov. 8, 1853, pp. 415–416.

[81] *Ibid.,* p. 417.

[82] *Ibid.,* letter of Mar., 1855, and Sept., 1855, pp. 426–447.

delay in the work of his Administration by assuring him that unless a government is soon organized, he will bring the guns of *The Two Pollies* to bear upon the Capitol. With this grand flourish the Major makes his final bow to the public.[83]

The chief concern of all the Downing letters, as has been seen, is political; yet the author considered the characterization of the New England Yankee as a most important part of his work.

> Genuine Yankee delineations [he writes in referring to these letters] do not consist in mere out of the way modes of expression, but in a subtile quaintness of thought, which under the simplest language conveys a homely truth or a statesman-like idea. So far is the genuine Yankee from being an awkward talking boor, he is on the contrary singularly wise, penetrating, and observant, reproducing in our day, from traditional use the language of Shakespeare and Milton.[84]

The native New England speech,[85] which in connection with the work of Seba Smith and Lowell merits extended treatment, it is not the province of this book to discuss. Emphasis should be placed, however, on the value of the Downing letters as a record of the life and character of the Down East Yankee, a type now rarely met with except in the pages of a book. This political satire is also significant as an experiment with a new form of American humor, and was so popular when first published that other writers, hoping for

[83] In a postscript to this book the Major indicates that his activities will continue, but there is no evidence that later letters were written or published.

[84] *Emerson's Mag. and Putnam's Monthly,* Vol. VI, p. 666. (June, 1858.)

[85] The terminology *dialect* in American speech is now being disputed. Cf. George P. Krapp, *The English Language in America,* N. Y., 1925, Chap. IV.

a share in the glory, took the name of Major Jack Downing, and often succeeded in deceiving the public. The history of such counterfeiting, which can be best understood by tracing it along with the successive series of the genuine letters, is a story in itself.

CHAPTER IV

THE HISTORY OF THE GENUINE AND THE SPURIOUS DOWNING LETTERS

ALTHOUGH the Downing letters were continued intermittently down to the period of the Civil War, they were at the height of their popularity during the years 1831 to 1835, and from that time the question of their authorship was widely discussed and debated. In the days of Jackson the curiosity of the American public to know the original Major Downing was perhaps as great as the desire of the English had been in the preceding century to know the author of the Junius letters. As neither Seba Smith nor any of the pseudo-Jacks signed their own names to single letters or collections written during the thirties, the question of authorship has grown more difficult with the intervening years.

Edgar Allan Poe in his *Chapter on Autography* echoed the literary gossip of the day and had his own bit of fun when he soberly offered the public for inspection the signature of the "veritable Jack himself, written by him individually in our own bodily presence,"[1] and suggested a comparison with the signature of Seba Smith and with that of James Brooks. The former, Poe had declared to be the true Jack, but asserted that the latter as reputed author of all the Downing letters "was entitled to a place among our literati."[2] One reason for giving the honor to Brooks may have been that he was a Down Easter, who had studied law in Portland in the office of John Neal, and, like the Major, had dabbled in politics. In 1831 he was elected to the state

[1] *Graham's Magazine,* Vol. XIX, p. 283. (Dec., 1841.) [2] *Ibid.*

legislature, and in the following year he went to Washington, where he won popularity as a newspaper writer. The main ground, however, for calling Brooks the original Jack was the fact that in the *New York Daily Express,* a paper established by him in 1836, a series of Downing letters appeared from 1837 to 1839 which were thought to have been written by him. John Neal stated his opinion of such counterfeiting in a comment on Seba Smith, whom he named as " the originator of the Major Downing letters, which were so gloated over in the days of Andrew Jackson and so shamefully imitated and plagiarized all over the country . . ." [3] When questioned in 1850 as to the source of the original letters, James Brooks denied being the creator of Jack Downing, but by a curious trick of his memory asserted that the letters were commenced in the *Portland Daily Advertiser,* and that he suggested the name of Jack Downing as derived from Jonathan Dow, the author of the letters and second mayor of Portland. Early in 1833 the *American Advocate,* a paper printed in Hallowell, Maine, did, in fact, mention this gentleman as the inventor of the Downing letters; and although the statement was contradicted in the same paper several days later, the Major, writing regularly in the *Portland Courier,* declared himself as " mad as a March hair " at the implication.[4]

For three years Seba Smith had the monopoly of his own creation, but his authorship was not generally known. During this time his letters were reprinted in various papers throughout the country. The number of these letters it has been possible to find in available newspapers for the years 1830–1833 is probably only a small part of those published in current papers of the day; but at least the letters exam-

[3] John Neal, *Portland Illustrated,* Portland, 1874, p. 80.

[4] *The Life and Writings of Major Jack Downing,* 1833, letter of Feb. 1, 1833, p. 186.

ined show that they circulated widely and may indicate which were most often reprinted.[5]

It was not until Major Downing's grand tour with the President in the late spring of 1833 that numerous imitators threatened the reputation of the original Major, who called them "worse than the pick pockets," and said, "he that steals my name ought to have his head broke."[6] Perhaps the letter of Seba Smith's most widely circulated and imitated was the one depicting the President receiving his degree as Doctor of Laws at Harvard. In the *Independent Chronicle and Boston Patriot* for July 6, 1833, is a letter dated June 26, 1833, taken from the *Boston Patriot and Daily Mercantile Advertiser,* which in its burlesque treatment of Jackson as a candidate for an LL. D. furnishes a typical illustration of what was done in the counterfeit letters. A single sentence gives sufficient indication of the method:

> The Gineral begun to bob and wink and wink and bob, and look as knowing as a rooster in a rainy day, and now and then scrape out one foot to be polite.

Several other counterfeit letters appeared, adding to the itinerary of the President during his trip through New England, and depicting Jack in need of cash and wearing apparel at a village tavern. The *Evening Gazette,* Boston, for July 6, 1833, published a spurious letter dated June, 1833, from Providence, written by Jack to Uncle Joshua, and urging the latter to make careful preparations for the President's coming.

> We shall certainly go to Downingville [he writes]. Get everything ready. Pick up all the loose rocks in the lane — throw the

[5] See bibliography for Downing letters circulated in newspapers.

[6] *The Life and Writings of Major Jack Downing* 1833, letter of June 25, 1833, p. 204.

apple tree bush over the fence, and shut up the hogs, and have your committee of arrangements and your arches ready.

The same letter appears in the *Litchfield Enquirer,* Connecticut, July 25, 1833, reprinted from the *Independent Chronicle and Boston Patriot.* A counterfeit letter, written by Jack from Bite Tavern, with no further address, but dated June 22, 1833, seems also to have been widely circulated, as it is found in the Boston *Evening Transcript* for June 28, 1833, in the *Essex Register,* Salem, for July 1, 1833, and in the *Litchfield Enquirer,* for July 11, 1833.

Seba Smith had at this time, however, only one formidable rival, Charles Augustus Davis, an iron merchant of New York, whose first letter signed J. Downing, Major, and written June 25 to the *New York Daily Advertiser,* described the accident befalling the Presidential party at Castle Bridge, New York, which Smith had recounted in a letter written June 14 to the *Portland Courier.* As the letter in the *Courier* had not reached New York, however, by June 25, it had probably not been seen by Davis.

No person attempting to counterfeit the Downing letters could have been more unlike the quiet, unpractical Yankee, who was their author, than Charles Augustus Davis. In him were combined a sharpness at trade, a literary taste, and a liking for fashionable society, where his wit was keenly appreciated. He was sufficiently successful as a merchant in the iron trade to have leisure for travel and for culture through books, and included among his friends the poet Halleck and other Knickerbocker writers. In the diary of Philip Hone, a well-to-do and public-spirited business man of New York, Davis is frequently mentioned as a guest at various dinner parties in the forties, and at the same period he is numbered among fashionable visitors at Saratoga Springs, who were attending a ball at this resort. He was

also, according to the diarist, one of a select group of Whigs who gave a dinner to Webster on November 4, 1842, and was conspicuous among those who sought to do Dickens honor during his visit to America in 1842. It was to be expected that a man of such tastes and political views, which seem to have been as pronounced in the thirties as in the forties, should see in the treatment of Jackson and the Yankee Downings an opportunity for ludicrous exaggeration rather than for humorous sympathy such as was shown by the Down East Democrat, Seba Smith.

In following the fortunes of the two series of letters written by Davis and Smith, one comes upon a curious chain of circumstances which seems to have no parallel in literary history. From June, 1833, on through the following fall and winter Downing letters by Davis and Smith were published widely over the country. After the appearance of the first Davis letter describing the accident at Castle Bridge, which Smith had already reported, the latter showed a desire to keep his series distinct. In letters dated June 25, 1833, both announced the President's intention to go to Downingville, but the plan was carried out by Davis only. Smith, later, in answer to Nabby Downing's letter of unutterable disappointment, gave the quarrel between the Major and Van Buren as the reason for not taking the trip. From then on, the two series of letters were distinctly different in subject-matter, Davis giving his attention almost entirely to questions concerned with Mr. Biddle and the Bank; Smith continuing the trip through New England with the President, and journeying back to Washington. The Major's nomination for President during the tour through New England gave a very important turn to Jack's political aspirations and again distinguished him from J. Downing, Major, of the Davis letters. But Davis, a born tease, one would judge, followed this cue shortly after in a letter addressed to

the Major by Solomon Jumper commiserating him because of his nomination for President and advising him to give up any political intentions.

In the same letter in which Smith exploited the Major's determination to run for President, Jack requested the editor of the *Portland Courier* to collect his letters and print them in a book, promising that he would write a history of his life and send it along as fast as he could get it done. This letter is dated July 20, 1833; but the intended publication did not appear until the following November. In the meantime letters of both Smith and Davis appeared in the same newspapers. For example, the *Independent Chronicle and Boston Patriot,* which had printed many original letters, published Smith and Davis letters in the same column on October 2, 1833, and on October 30, 1833. In the first issue the Smith letter dated September 14, 1833, in which Jackson compares Downing with Daniel Webster, appears along with the Davis letter of September 23, 1833, which is concerned mainly with the question of the Bank. In the second issue a Davis letter of October 22, 1833, on cabinet troubles is in the same column with a Smith letter of the same date on Nabby Downing's visit to Portland. That the letters addressed to the *Portland Courier* were by the original Major seems to have been generally understood,[7] but occasionally in a statement reprinted from the *New York Daily Advertiser* credit was given the author of the letters published in that paper as the real Downing.[8]

The individual signatures of Davis and Smith as J. Downing, Major, and Major Jack Downing should have served to distinguish the two writers; but Davis confused many readers by calling himself the author of all the Downing letters.

[7] *Connecticut Courant,* July 15, and Aug. 12, 1833; *Detroit Journal and Michigan Advertiser,* July 17, 1833.

[8] *United States Gazette for the Country,* Phila., Jan. 15, 1834.

In a letter of October 27, 1833, to the *Portland Courier*, he posed as the original Jack Downing, viewing with condescension all his earlier productions in the *Courier*. By way of apology for writing better now than formerly, an editorial note states that "he dealt out his notions to suit latitudes — hog's fat to one and fresh butter to another." But he suggested that all his letters — those written to the *Portland Courier* and those to the *New York Daily Advertiser* be printed by Little and Holden, Philadelphia. Seba Smith, fearing this proposal might be followed by a pirated edition of his letters, put an appeal in the *Portland Courier* of November 1 to Messrs. Little and Holden to "give up the intended publication of the genuine letters of Major Jack Downing." He added that the "only authentic letters were to be published in a few weeks, that more than half those in papers for six months past were spurious, and that many true letters had been widely circulated and mutilated." Editors were begged to copy this article and "help to set the matter right." This appeal was reprinted in the *Connecticut Courant* on November 4, 1833, and was probably circulated widely enough to effect its purpose, as the collection suggested by Davis never appeared.

Smith, keenly sensitive to the fact that his rights had been trampled upon, did scant justice to the talents of Davis, whose witty caricature, spicy humor, and quick repartee delighted his readers. Colonel James Watson Webb, however, the editor of the *Morning Courier and New York Enquirer*, in writing of this situation some years later, did recognize the merit of the Davis letters and at the same time stood loyally by the original Major in his declaration that no one had the moral right to take his name. Colonel Webb alleged that the history of the Downing letters

exhibited the injustice of cutting in between a writer who had opened a new vein of literary ore and his undoubted right to

prosecute his labors in his own way until they reached such a reward as they might deserve;

and supported his assertion with the following explanation:

Seba Smith was without doubt not only the founder of what he fondly and naturally calls the "Downing literature," but he is in point of fact the only writer who has ever been entirely successful in the genuine dialect of Yankee Land. Some of his letters written during the "flare up" of the Nullifiers in South Carolina are most admirable specimens of a strong common sense conveyed in the homely language of a strong-minded and unsophisticated Down Easter. They were as sensible as they were amusing, and they told well upon the country. In the very midst of their popularity a clever imitator arose in this city who "went into the same line" with so much spirit and really with so much true humor that the two writers became confounded and the original projector of that mode of reaching the public attention was actually driven from the field. Against this treatment he protests and protests rightfully . . . , and with all our respect for his most prominent competitor — and we certainly have respect for that ingenious gentleman — we take sides with the true Jack.[9]

If Davis had created a new Yankee character as did Mrs. Ann S. Stephens in 1843 in *Jonathan Slick*, there might then have been a competition in a fair and open field, and had Davis won the race, he would have justly earned his laurels. But to appropriate boldly all that Seba Smith had built up in the history of Jack Downing and his connections, was a procedure which few today would consider justifiable.

While Smith and Davis were contemplating the publication of their letters in book form, competition among other imitators of Jack Downing was keen throughout the country; but Davis was Smith's only rival asserting himself to be the genuine and original Major Downing. On the western frontier Smith's conception of Jack as an office-seeker arrested attention and set imagination to work. From South

[9] *Morning Courier and New York Enquirer*, July 16, 1845.

Bend, Indiana, or "Hoosher-land," in August of 1833, emerged Jonathan Downing, who in a letter to Major Jack confided his notions of what an office-hunter's tactics should be. First of all, he should dress in sorry style to suit Republican taste, and ride a horse like "Don Quixit."

> Then [he elaborated] he must turn a nashun site of sommersets, and when he is with Clay men, why he must be fur Clay too — and when with the Jackson boys, why he must go the whole quadruped for Jackson, tale and all — then for the bank, and against the bank — promes evry man a rode rite by his house, or korn krib, and if he kant get no nue ones, why he must say he will have the old ones twysted round and about to suit evrybody.[10]

In July and August of 1833 *The Cincinnati Daily Gazette* printed, with great frequency, many specimens of Downing letters.[11] The interest elicited resulted, however, in a publication which neither Smith nor Davis would have favored, a pirated edition containing six Smith and six Davis letters, together with nine imitations, several of which had already appeared in New England and Western newspapers.[12] The Cincinnati volume is entitled *Letters Written during the President's Tour Down East; by Myself, Major Jack Downing of Downingville,* and is dedicated to Van Buren, at whom the largest amount of the satire is directed. The first letter, which shows no attempt to use Yankee dialect, is an account of a dinner given to Major Jack Downing in New York, and was evidently suggested by a hint thrown out in Smith's let-

[10] Letter of Aug. 15, 1833, published in *The Cincinnati Daily Gazette,* Aug. 29, 1833.

[11] It is doubtful if in any Western city American literary beginnings found more encouragement during this period than in Cincinnati.

[12] Published by J. A. James, Cincinnati. As the last letter of this edition is dated Aug. 4, 1833, it seems probable that the volume was published in the late summer or early fall of 1833. Second edition, 1838.

ter describing Jack's stay in New York on his first trip to Washington. The Major had written:

> . . . they gave me a *public dinner* there. I can't think what's the matter that it hasn't been published yet.[13]

The editor of the Cincinnati book chose the most popular of the Downing letters, evidently without distinguishing between those written by Davis and those written by Smith, and not being guided even by the dates, appears to have scrambled them together carelessly as they came to his hands. If the six epistles of Davis and the six of Smith here included could have been arranged in two distinct series, the characteristics of the two leading Downings would have been evident. For instance, the two very dissimilar letters concerned with the accident at Castle Bridge were included along with the Smith letters containing Nabby's account of the disappointment in Downingville when the Presidential party failed to arrive and Jack's explanation in reply, and the Davis letters describing the entertainment of Jackson and the other officers of the Government in Downingville. Then two of the letters on the Bank, with which subject Davis was mainly concerned, were added, as well as the so-called "dockyment" giving Major Downing's nomination for the Presidency. There was, however, so much confusion between the two Downings that a distinction at that time was probably difficult, and the numerous imitators of both made the problem more puzzling.

In November of 1833 Seba Smith carried out his plan of publishing his letters, collecting them into the volume already discussed, and entitled *The Life and Writings of Major Jack Downing of Downingville, away Down East in the State of Maine — Written by Himself.*[14] A quotation from

[13] *The Life and Writings of Major Jack Downing,* 1833, letter of May 30, 1831, p. 132. [14] Published by Lilly and Waite, Boston.

Hudibras follows the title. The frontispiece is a picture of the Major busily writing with a quill at an old table. A book lies open at one side of his manuscript, and the word *Junius* in large letters is clearly legible. The volume is respectfully inscribed to General Jackson by his faithful friend and humble servant, Major Jack Downing.

The publishing of the book may have been hastened by the October letter of Davis to the *Portland Courier*, in which he claimed to be the original Jack Downing and "acknowledged all his juvenile productions." In the preface to Smith's volume, the author stated that he was printing a book to get his "letters all together out of the way of the rascally counterfeits." "And," said he, "he that will print his letters and put my name to 'em would steal a sheep." The volume ended with an appendix, in which were given five of the best counterfeit letters, four of them by Davis. The editor emphasized the fact, however, that while any who chose to write in the Major's style were at liberty to do so, none had the moral right to assume his name.

Davis retaliated in a letter of December 9, 1833, to Dwight, editor of the *New York Daily Advertiser*, by saying:

> And there is another thing I don't like, . . . and that is printin in a book all the letters I first rit, and mixin' up other letters . . . , and callin some of my letters to you counterfits. As soon as I git the Gineral threw this Congress, I'll turn to and git my letters all together that I writ to you, beginnin with the Grand Tower.

This was done and the third book of Downing letters, entirely by Davis, was issued by the Harpers in January, the title reading *Letters of J. Downing, Major, Downingville Militia, Second Brigade, to his old friend, Mr. Dwight of the New York Daily Advertiser*.[15] The frontispiece of the vol-

[15] In Providence in 1836 a *Jack Downing Song Book* was published, which had gone through four editions by 1839. This is a col-

ume is a picture of Downingville folks with Jack a little above the rest looking, so Colonel Crockett says, "as if he had begotten them all."[16] On the opposite page is a vignette of Andrew Jackson as seen through the "glorification spectacles."

Major Downing refuses to tell anything about his life in the preface, as he says, "Folks know more about me already than I ever tell'd 'em and some know a leetle more than I do myself." A preface by Theodore Dwight states that no letters had been preserved before the commencement of the Grand Tower, as he, Dwight, was unable to foresee what would come out of it. He further explains:

> The Major did not, on his arrival here with "*the Gineral*," call on us as he had promised; and, as we naturally supposed he was mixed up with great folks, above our calibre, we did not call on him. We candidly confess, that not esteeming, as perhaps we ought to have done, the company he was in, we were a little inclined to avoid unnecessary familiarity with him.

As Dwight was a staunch Federalist and a member of the Hartford Convention, his opinion of Jackson may well be imagined.

Those who read the letters by Davis with more interest than those by Smith, were doubtless attracted by his more specific criticism of political affairs. He took very firmly the Whig position, and confined most of his attention to the

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lection of popular songs, which appears to have been suggested by one of the Davis letters.

In a volume by Davis entitled *A Week in Wall Street by One Who Knows,* published in 1841, a Downing letter appears in Chap. V. The letter is dated 1835 and is written by the Major from Washington to Squire Swartwout of New York City, who had been appointed collector of customs by Jackson.

[16] Colonel Crockett, *Tour to the North and Down East,* Phila., 1835, pp. 221–222.

problems of finance. A favorite method of his was to put a remark in the mouth of the General which could be turned to advantage by the opposition. The following speech of Jackson's, which was occasioned by the adjusting of his "glorification spectacles," is an interesting illustration:

> And with that the Gineral rub'd his specks, and fix'd 'em close up to his eyes, and took his hickory, and began to walk up and down, talking about the popularity and the glory of his administration — "Why," says the Gineral, "nothin' can hold a candle to it — it will be jist like a *light-house* to all the folks that come arter us, Major." "Well," says I, "Gineral, that's pretty much my notion too. But the worst on't is, some, I'm afear'd, will say that *light-houses* don't always stand in safe places — but sarve to tell folks '*there is danger nigh,*' and to look out sharp or they'll go bump ashore." [17]

Smith's attitude toward politics differed from that of Davis. During most of his life independent of party, he attacked principles rather than men. He could laugh equally at the Huntonites [18] and Jacksonites, who were exhibiting the animosities of local politics in Maine, and were also illustrating the absurdity of petty rivalries between the Federalists and Democrats in the country at large. Davis, the shrewd politician, looked at the immediate situation, but not very far beyond it; Smith, with more of the statesman's attitude, a dreamer rather than a practical man of affairs, looked into the future. He was not so much concerned as Davis with the Bank, which as a relic of aristocracy seemed to be an anachronism in the days of the emerging democracy. Davis was continually putting Jackson in a questionable light; Smith, although he had his fun with the General, did not destroy one's faith in the sincerity of "Old Hickory."

[17] *Letters of J. Downing, Major,* 1834, pp. 232–233.

[18] Jonathan A. Hunton was the candidate for the National Republican governor of Maine, who was elected by popular vote of the Huntonites, February, 1830.

J. Downing, Major, is remembered in historical writings on account of his acuteness in political affairs;[19] but while historians have done Seba Smith an injustice, even though unintentional, in naming Davis as the original author of the Downing letters, the palm has been given Smith in the annals of American literature. Davis followed his pattern with admirable skill, but Smith undoubtedly succeeded better than Davis in using the Yankee dialect and in giving a true representation of Yankee character. The editor of the *Morning Courier and New York Enquirer* in referring to Davis and other imitators of Smith said in the forties:

> The other Jack never hit the true Doric. It consists not in outlandish orthography, nor in the mixing up of the patois of the South and West with the peculiar phraseology of the East, sprinkled now and then with the Cockneyism of a Londoner. In one word, the attempts to touch off the oddities of an uneducated New Englander, by the imitators of the real Major, are one and all as far removed from real Yankeeism as they are from the language of a Somersetshire peasant.[20]

Many instances may be found to illustrate the truth of this observation. In Davis one comes frequently upon such a speech as this:

> There was a swod of fine folks, and dreadful handsome galls; and the house was nigh upon chuck full.[21]

Smith in describing an occurrence in some respects similar, writes thus:

[19] In A. B. Hart, *American History told by Contemporaries,* N. Y., 1897–1901, Vol. III, p. 540, C. A. Davis is given as the author of the Downing letters, "among the earliest sustained efforts at satirical political writing — very popular and often imitated. Seba Smith used the same pseudonym." Cf. also J. Schouler, *History of the United States of America under the Constitution,* N. Y., 1880–1913, Vol. IV, pp. 122–123, and J. Parton, Life of Andrew Jackson, pp. 489–490.

[20] *Morning Courier and New York Enquirer,* July 16, 1845.

[21] *Letters of J. Downing, Major,* 1834, letter of July 14, 1833, p. 35.

But what made the Gineral hold his head up . . . was when we marched along the street by them are five thousand gals all dressed up, and looking as pretty as a million of butterflies.[22]

The simplicity of the second quotation is nearer the dialect of the Down Easter than the overloaded crudity of the first.

The descriptions of people in the letters by Davis are usually caricatures rather than likenesses. His picture of Zekiel Bigelow is an illustration:

And there stood that cretur Zekiel right afore him, talking like a book, and his head was as smooth, and every hair on it slicked down with a dipped candle; and that are kew of his wo'd tell the folks behind which way his eye turned jest as well as though they was lookin strait in his face — caze it kinder lodged on his collar, and every time he looked up, it would stand still a minet, and point right strait up in the air.[23]

Smith's portrayal of Jackson at the time of his second election when he is met by the Major, who is running at full speed with news of the returns from Pennsylvania, is done in a different way. The combination of an almost poetic fancy with the rustic treatment lends a quaint charm to the picture:

"Gineral," says I, "it's all over with — " "I won't hear a word of it," says he, stomping his foot. His eyes flashed fire so that I trembled and almost fell backward. But I see he didn't understand me. "Dear Gineral," says I, "it's all over with Clay and the Bank." At that he clapt his hands and jumpt like a boy. I never see the President jump before, as much as I've been acquainted with him. In less than a minute he looked entirely like another man. His eyes were as calm and as bright as the moon jest coming out from behind a black thunder-cloud.[24]

[22] *The Life and Writings of Major Jack Downing,* 1833, letter of July 2, 1833, p. 214.

[23] *Letters of J. Downing, Major,* 1834, letter of June 29, 1833, p. 25.

[24] *The Life and Writings of Major Jack Downing,* 1833, letter of Nov. 5, 1832, p. 171.

The original Major shows a true humor which is often unconscious and brings the laugh on the speaker as well as others. In fact, the Major says, "I never tried to ridicule anybody in my life; I always tell the plain, simple truth." Davis, on the other hand, endows J. Downing, Major, with a sparkling wit, which is generally directed at other people. Smith varies his letters by including many from Downingville folks, from the country and city cousins, Nabby and Sarah Downing, from the politic Cousin Ephraim, and from Uncle Joshua, one of his best Yankee characters, for whose sagacity in political affairs Jack professes great respect, and whose combination of shrewdness and simplicity his nephew has inherited. Joshua Downing is hardly mentioned in the Davis letters, but is superseded by Zekiel Bigelow, whose sharpness as a financier makes him more congenial to J. Downing, Major. Nearly all the Davis letters, however, are written by the Major, himself. A close comparison of the two humorists would show rather more brilliance and striking wit on the part of Davis; still this advantage is outweighed by the fact that he was only an imitator. In addition, Smith had a wider field, in that he did not keep his eyes fixed on the evils of one party only, and approached more nearly the general conception of true humor by having his fun without leaving a sting behind.

A good example of the general confusion as to the authorship of the Downing letters caused by the fact that both Davis and Smith claimed the honor of being the original Jack, is seen in *Colonel Crockett's Tour to the North and Down East,* published in 1835. The author of this book makes several references to Jack Downing, all but one of which may be recognized in the Davis letters. Then he accepts an invitation from Davis to dine in New York with the "rale Major Jack Downing." In the meantime Seba Smith asks Crockett to contribute letters to his paper, the *Downing*

Gazette, and Colonel Crockett's answer to this request refers to Jackson's " glorification spectacles " and Van Buren's teaching the deacon's " darter " how to shuffle, both of which are features of the Davis letters. It is evident, therefore, that the Colonel did not know which Downing he was addressing.

The influence of both Smith and Davis is also seen on the New York stage during 1834 and 1835, when several skits featuring Jack Downing and his kin were performed by leading actors of the time at the Park and Bowery theatres. In *Life in New York,* played at the Bowery in the spring of 1834, the Major's part, evidently drawn from Davis's version of him as among the brokers, was taken by G. F. Gates. This performance seems to have exceeded in popularity Hackett's production of *Major Jack Downing* at the Park Theatre during the same period. In the latter piece the Major appeared among the Downingville folk which are particularly stressed in the Smith letters.[25]

Western imitations of the Downing letters in 1834 seem to be almost equally indebted to Smith and Davis. One very clever series written from Detroit by Sargent Joel to the Major in Washington echoes Davis in its satirical treatment of Jackson, and follows Smith in its humorous account of legislative proceedings in Detroit before Michigan's admission to the Union.[26]

[25] Cf. *New York Evening Post* from Apr. 24 to May 24, 1834. *Ibid.,* for June 10, 1835, shows Jack represented by George H. Hill in *The Lion of the East* at the Park Theatre. *Ibid.,* for Sept. 14, to Sept. 20, 1835, shows him a leading character in *Moonshine or Lunar Discoveries* at the Bowery Theatre. Hackett, Hill, and Gates all had a reputation for playing Yankee parts with skill. Newspaper references for this information were received through the courtesy of Professor G. C. D. Odell.

[26] This series began in the *Detroit Journal and Michigan Advertiser,* Jan. 29, 1834. Michigan was not admitted to the Union until Jan., 1837.

Downing letters continued to be published in volumes which have been credited to Smith or Davis but which either were not written by them at all or were printed without their sanction. In the early winter of 1834 a book was published in Philadelphia entitled *Select Letters of Major Jack Downing of the Downingville Militia, Away Down East in the State of Maine, Written by Himself.*[27] This contains merely Smith and Davis letters and those included in the appendix of Smith's volume. The preface to this volume, dated January 30, 1834, is inferior to the work of both Smith and Davis and shows a distinct departure from the manner of each in spelling and dialect. The life of Jack Downing introducing Smith's volume of letters, which was never printed in the *Portland Courier* and was therefore protected by copyright, does not appear here, but is supplanted by a letter from the *New York Daily Advertiser* concerning the ancestors of Jack Downing; the same letter appeared among the counterfeit letters in Smith's collection. It seems hardly probable that the editor of this volume, who affirms he is the author of the letters to Dwight of New York as well as of those to the *Portland Courier,* was Seba Smith; and since sixty of the seventy-one letters selected were written by Smith, it seems even less likely that the editor was Davis. This book is generally catalogued under Seba Smith's works with the note that it should not be confused with the spurious letters of Davis in 1834; the evidence seems clear, however, that this, like that of Cincinnati, is a pirated edition.

In 1834 there also appeared a life of Andrew Jackson purporting to have been written by Major Jack Downing. This book is usually ascribed to Seba Smith, but in general tone and treatment it reads more like the work of Davis or of

[27] Published by Withington and Davis, Philadelphia. Little and Holden of Philadelphia were mentioned by Davis. There is a copy in the Library of Congress.

one of the latter's imitators. While it is dedicated to Jackson, as were Smith's letters, the dedication is written in a dialect very different from Smith's and shows a biting sarcasm which characterizes none of his writings; on the other hand, the wit displayed here does not resemble that of Davis in his letters to Dwight. After stating that the business of a dedication is to flatter, the writer remarks of Jackson, "The numerous graces which are revealed in your character are nothin compared with the virtues you don't stand in no need of." In the biography the incidents referred to in Major Downing's life are those given by Davis, not by Smith; for instance, the Major's report on the Bank [28] and the presentation of an axe from Starks and Co.[29] But as a whole, the book is so far inferior to the collection of Davis letters, that it is quite probable it may have been written by one of his imitators. It seems certain, at least, that it was not written by Smith.

In July, 1834, the Major posed as editor both in Portland and in New York. *Major Downing's Advocate and Mechanic's Journal,* published in New York with Davis letters, declared its policy an "uncompromising opposition to the corrupt administration" of that time. Few copies of the paper are available, and it was probably short-lived.[30] It is possible that Davis was the editor, but the evidence is not clear. The *Downing Gazette,* published by Seba Smith in Portland, Maine, had a wider circulation and evidently continued for a longer period. A number of the letters in this weekly may be found republished in the newspapers of Ohio and Kentucky. In the winter of 1836 the original Major

[28] *Life of Andrew Jackson by Major Jack Downing,* Phila., 1834, p. 235. *Letters of J. Downing, Major,* N. Y., 1834, letter of Aug. 4, 1833, pp. 43–50.

[29] *Ibid.,* letter of Jan. 10, 1834, pp. 187–192. *Life of Andrew Jackson by Major Jack Downing,* p. 237.

[30] N. Y. Public Library has files from July 9, 1834, to Nov. 1, 1834.

Downing, apparently exhausted by competition and editorial duties, develops a cough, grows weaker and weaker, and finally, in March, dies and has a splendid funeral, which is duly written up by Cousin Nabby and Uncle Joshua on March 22 in the *Portland Courier and Family Reader* for April 1, 1836.[31]

The next Downing letters to appear were published in the *New York Daily Express,* some seventeen of them being printed between August, 1837, and April, 1839. Over two years had passed, Jack writes, signing his name J. Downing, Major, since his letters to Mr. Dwight of the *New York Daily Advertiser* had ended. This evidence would indicate the authorship of Davis, particularly as the *Advertiser* was united with the *Express* in 1836.[32] James Brooks, however, who was editor-in-chief of the *Express,* was also understood to be the author of part of the Downing letters. The first letter, printed August 16, 1837, showed no attempt to use Yankee dialect, but the fourth, published September 19, 1837, and telling of Uncle Sam's losing his buttons is done quite in the style of Davis; hence it is possible that some of the letters in this series were written by Brooks and some by Davis. This Jack does most of his talking in monologue, and his ship, *The Two Pollies,* is depicted in various precarious situations in illustration of the dangers threatening the ship of state. In a letter to Congress of December 29, 1838, the Major advises more familiarity with the Constitution, introduces a new character, Deacon Doolittle, and attacks various political humbugs, including among them abolitionists. Even the best people, he finds, may be taken

[31] The *Gazette* was, of course, discontinued at this time, but the exact date can not be given, as no copies have been available later than the issue of March 28, 1835. The death of Jack Downing is referred to in a letter, published in *The New World* for June, 1840, called *Major Jack Downing's Second Life.*

[32] Cf. the *New York Daily Express,* Nov. 1, 1836.

in by humbugs, and so he launches forth with the experience of Deacon Doolittle:

> There was my old neighbor, Deacon Doolittle [he writes], one of the spriest old chaps in raising early garden sass and the best pumpkins in the hull country round — a man allowed to be so knowing in most matters that it was a common saying that whoever bought the Deacon for a fool would lose money by him — he heard the anti-masonic cackle and took up the same notion. I called on him one day and instead of finding him in the garden (which was all overrun with weeds) I found him reading anti-masonic addresses. "It's all over with us, Major," says he, "the end of creation has come at last," and he fetched a deep groan — "it is only wonderful to me," says he — "that the country has prospered as it has since the Independence with so many Masons in it."

Later Jack calls on the Deacon again and hears a different story.

> I dropt in upon the Deacon [he adds]. I found him hoeing out some blue grass among his cockumbers. I twisted and turn'd all matters and things of a public natur, but the Deacon never said one word about the masons and anti-masons — it was pretty clear that the Deacon had enuf of humbug — . . . and I see he had his eye teeth cut — "things go well enuff for me, Major," says he, "and if any man catches me neglecting my grounds again to cackle over any egg he chooses to throw in my nest, he is amazingly mistaken."

It seems probable that this letter, representing more nearly than those of Davis the native Yankee speech, and some others, having a certain homely vigor but lacking the quick repartee of Davis, were written by the Down Easter Brooks.

In the meantime Seba Smith, who had moved with his family to New York, was from February 23, 1839, sending letters signed John Smith, Esquire, to the *New York Mirror*. These, as has been mentioned, dealt mainly with the Aroostook War. In May they were collected into a little volume en-

titled *John Smith's Letters with Picters to Match.*[33] The reputed author, John Smith, dedicated the book to Uncle Joshua Downing out of the respect he felt for the memory of his cousin Major Jack Downing, at whose funeral Parson Smith of Smithville had officiated. He says:

> I don't mean none of your New York counterfeit Jack Downings that stole my cousin Jack's name, but my own dear Cousin, the Major, that writ all his letters to the *Portland Courier* and the *Downing Gazette,* printed in Portland, State of Maine.

The original series of Downing letters Seba Smith evidently regarded then as closed.

In 1840 something curious happens. Major Jack comes to life again, and in a letter published in *The New World*[34] recounts his marvelous resurrection by some of the pills of Dr. Solomon Wise. The Major declares he has come to New York for the express purpose of sending his news from there over the country, and that by a most lucky chance he met in the city park the editor of *The New World.* Jack's marriage had evidently occurred shortly before his demise, for he comments on the joy of his gentle wife, Polly, at his miraculous return to life.

During the early forties, fugitive letters, as has been observed, were published in *The Rover* and *Bunker Hill,* magazines edited by Smith. In one of these epistles Jack notes that the Gineral is mad about the counterfeit letters written by Davis. The Major adds:

> I've hearn that he [meaning Davis] goes round among folks and tries to get into notice and into good society, *by calling himself me;* that he goes to Saratoga and other places where the big bugs get together, and calls himself *me;* that he goes to great dinners

[33] Published by Samuel Colman, N. Y., 1839.

[34] *The New World,* letter of June 1, 1840, Vol. I, p. 19. (June, 1840.)

such as they had in New York when the great Mr. Boz was here from England and gets the whole company to look at him by calling himself *me*.[35]

From what is known of Davis' associations, it will be seen that Smith's strictures were not exactly true; but Davis did unquestionably call attention to himself by posing as the original Major. The dinner given to Dickens on February 18, 1842, is evidently referred to here, when Davis read a Downing letter which amused the company assembled. His little joke on copyright, given for Dickens' benefit, was rather daring, as it touched himself, had he stopped to think about it, as well as his fellow countrymen, some of whom, he said, understood copyright to mean right to copy.[36]

In 1845 a little book was published entitled *Jack Downing's Letters by Major Jack Downing* or *May Day in New York*. This has been carelessly assigned to Davis, although it bears the stamp of Smith from the cover to the postscript. The preface of the volume, evidently written by Seba Smith, gives a review of the Downing literature, includes the first letter of the original Major's, dated January 18, 1830, and outlines his career up to the "ducking" at Castle Garden, when a new set of Downing letters commenced, and C. A. D——, a Broad Street merchant, was most delighted at his success. In other words the preface is ostensibly written to explain to the mystified public who the original Major was and to show the injustice of Davis' claims. The first part is called *Letters to Aunt Keziah or House-hunting and Moving. Sketches from Life,* which form the second part of the volume, are signed Seba Smith, and are stories later included in his volume *'Way Down East*. It is clear that no one but

[35] *The Rover,* Vol. III, No. 18, p. 286.

[36] See W. C. Wilkins, *Charles Dickens in America,* N. Y., 1912, p. 137.

Smith could have been the author of this book, although some one else might have compiled it under his direction.

When Smith commenced writing his last series of Downing letters for the *National Intelligencer,* the question of authorship was again raised because of Jack's raillery of the well-known Thomas Ritchie, then editor of *The Washington Union,* the organ of the government under Polk. In that paper, shortly after the Downing letter was published, Ritchie declared emphatically that the original Jack Downing was the worthy C. A. D. of New York, and that the present Major writing for the *National Intelligencer* was not "the Simon Pure, but a counterfeit presentment — in other words, something of the literary 'jackdaw in the peacock's plumes.'" [37] This brought a rejoinder from Smith in which he went again over the history of his letters, and in referring to the first Davis letter said:

> Nobody couldn't dispute but this was the true, ginuine, "original" Downing document, although my "vile imitations" of it had been going on and published almost every week for two years. I say nobody couldn't dispute it, because 'twas proved by Scripture and poetry both. For the Bible says, "The first shall be last, and the last first"; and poetry says, "Coming events cast their shadows before." So the shadows, the "vile imitations," had been flying about the country for more than two years before the original event got along.[38]

During the period of secession and the Civil War, Jack Downing's name again appeared in print.[39] In 1862 a series

[37] *My Thirty Years Out of the Senate,* N. Y., 1859, letter of Aug., 1847, p. 268.

[38] *Ibid.,* p. 271, 272.

[39] This Downing refers to letters written some ten years earlier when he was showing General Kossuth the sights about the country. Smith, it will be remembered, directed a letter to Kossuth, Dec. 22, 1851.

of letters on Lincoln and the War was commenced in a satirical tone in the *New York Weekly Caucasian,* a Copperhead paper, which for a year was excluded from the United States mail.[40] The paper had a large circulation, though necessarily local for a time, and these letters were successful and popular for a period of two years.

They were collected from the *Caucasian* into a volume in 1864 and entitled *Letters of Major Jack Downing of the Downingville Militia.* On the title page is printed, as a message from Major Downing to Lincoln,

> The Constitution is a Dimmycratic machine and it's got to run as a Dimmycratic machine, or it won't run at all.

In the year 1862 the Republican party met with great reverses in the State of New York — an event which is made much of in these later Downing letters. The author's satire is very different from that of Petroleum V. Nasby, Bill Arp, or Orpheus C. Kerr, who were writing letters at the same time, in that his attacks are much more personal. Lincoln is his main target, and he does not stop with ridicule of his conduct in war and politics, but represents him as a weak-minded individual fonder of whiskey, conundrums, and vulgar jokes than of directing his attention to national problems. The war is declared needless, and slavery an institution ordained by God. Petroleum V. Nasby at the same time was exposing the disloyalty of the Democratic party, aiming his shafts particularly at the Copperheads and their leader, Vallandigham; but he did not stoop to personal slander.

In this collection of letters,[41] as in those written by Davis

[40] The first letter, of Feb. 4, 1862, appeared in the *Caucasian* for Feb. 8, 1862.

[41] The fact that there is a London edition shows that the book found some favor in England, though the attitude of the author to-

to Dwight during Jackson's administration, the political criticism is not far-seeing. As Davis was then in his sixty-seventh year and a staunch Democrat, it is possible that the letters were from his pen; but his authorship seems, on the whole, improbable. One would expect J. Downing, Major, the original signature of Davis, to have been used had he been the writer. The Major's ability in finance is several times illustrated, and the story of Lincoln's finding no place for his papers because one pocket is sewed up may have been suggested by that of General Jackson's losing his spectacles because there is a hole in the pocket where they belong. The style is lively and readable, and the anecdotes used for illustration are telling; but, for the most part, these letters are inferior in wit and striking characterization to those written earlier by Davis to Dwight. Such deterioration in literary effort of later years is, of course, possible; but the fact that the humor in these Civil War letters is often marred by excessive vulgarity makes it seem unlikely that they were the work of a man whose culture and refinement of tastes were marked by his friends and associates.

The original Major is silent on Civil War questions, possibly feeling the situation too serious for jesting, or considering his work as a humorist by that time completed.[42]

It has been indicated that the last of the spurious Downing letters showed a definite lowering in tone; the genuine letters, however, as will have been observed from their treatment in the previous chapter, were written in their author's best manner until the end. While the many imitations and

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ward the Emancipation Proclamation was directly opposed to the general opinion of that measure in England.

[42] Seba Smith wrote a speech signed by John Smith, Esquire, and published in 1864, in which he denounced the idea of peace as cowardly until victory had been won, and declared it to be the work of his generation to eradicate the institution of slavery.

pirated editions of the Downing letters interfered with the original Major's carrying out of his own purposes in his own way, he may have found comfort in the thought that they furnished unquestionable proof of the widespread popularity of the first series.

CHAPTER V

FROM PORTLAND TO NEW YORK IN THE FORTIES

THE most prosperous time in the lives of Seba Smith and Elizabeth Oakes Smith was during the early thirties, when the initial success of the Downing letters brought them material comforts and the hope of leisure at some future period for more concentrated literary work. This expectation, however, was destined never to be realized. In fact, because of the failure of Lilly and Wait, the profit from the publication of *The Life and Writings of Major Jack Downing* amounted to far less than they had anticipated. To Mrs. Oakes Smith these years in Portland were of distinct value as preparation for later writing. In her autobiography she speaks of the essays, poems, and stories that she composed for her husband's papers at odd moments when not occupied with household duties or the mothering of small boys. She is evidently the Aunt Darkiss Brown of the *Downing Gazette,* who the Major asserts "can write as slick poetry as any there is going nowadays and she'll write for me anytime"; but more frequently her articles were anonymous or, as has been mentioned, were signed by the initial "E." Finding much of her material in her own life and surroundings, she wrote poems on childhood and tales based on legends of Maine.[1] Yet at the same time she was looking beyond her own experience into the lives of such famous women as Charlotte Corday [2] and Madame de Stael,[3] whom she sketched

[1] *Hokomok,* in *Portland Courier,* May 6, 1831.
[2] *Portland Courier,* Mar. 15, 1831.
[3] *Downing Gazette,* Nov. 1, 1834.

vividly. Her early interest in these contrasting figures seems significant when one later finds her gaining repute in two distinct capacities: as an earnest reformer and as a brilliant social leader in the literary circles of New York.

For the early development of these diverse interests Portland was perhaps a good training school. On many an occasion receptions were tendered to people of distinction who rarely omitted a visit to this city by the sea if journeying through northern New England. General Scott and Daniel Webster were among other honored guests who, according to reports, must have been charmed by the beauty of Portland's women and the keen intelligence of its citizens. It was made a city in 1831 and Mrs. Oakes Smith writes, it was a gay little one "though devoid of a theatre."[4] She neglects to mention that there was for a few years a playhouse on Free Street, where Edwin Forrest performed at least once; but as religious interests proved stronger than theatrical, it was converted in 1836 into a Baptist church.

Public entertainments and exhibitions seem to have been rare in Portland, although the parade of a menagerie comprising fifty wagons and cages and one hundred and twenty superb horses was featured in the papers for 1835. In the fall of 1833 a travelling showman introduced a spectacular performance, which was billed with similar panoramic displays in Boston and New York. It was called the Conflagration of Moscow, represented by movable figures and shifting scenery, and was probably as elaborate a production as any given in Portland during the thirties.

Nabby Downing, in a letter of October 22, 1833, described the spectacle as the "Congregation of Moscow" and considered it the big event of her visit to the city.

[4] See *Selections from the Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith,* p. 48.

I must say [she writes to her cousin Sally in Downingville] it was the grandest sight that ever I did see. A thousand buildings and meeting houses all in a light flame, and the fire and smoke rolling up to the clouds, and thousands and thousands of soldiers marching and riding through the streets, and the drums and the fifes and the bugles and the bells and the guns; O Sally, you must come and see it, if you have to come afoot and alone as the girl went to be married.[5]

As the price of admittance, according to Nabby, was very low at two and three pence, and the profits were to be given to charitable societies, the large audiences must have included all classes in the city and particularly any who had scruples against theatre-going.

Both the humorist and his wife were popular among the people of Portland; but they could not have been more unlike in their attitude toward public questions. Seba Smith held himself apart from bitter controversies in religion and politics, as one might expect of the creator of Jack Downing, but Elizabeth Oakes Smith plunged into discussions of current issues with a strongly partisan spirit.

Portland at this period was in a turmoil of political and religious agitation, and ready to hear the pleas of any leaders in reform. It was during the thirties that Mr. George Thomson, an anti-slavery speaker in England, and an associate of Garrison and Whittier as an abolitionist in America, aroused much feeling in Maine by his lectures at the colleges in Waterville and Brunswick, and particularly by those delivered in Portland, where he spoke six times. His severe criticism of the United States for countenancing the institution of slavery offended many listeners and deeply stirred more. The disfavor with which he was received in Boston in 1835 necessitated his escape from that conservative city, in a small boat, to a vessel bound for England. At

[5] *The Life and Writings of Major Jack Downing*, 1833, p. 233.

meetings of the Abolitionists, of the Colonization Society, advocating the formation of a free negro colony in Africa, and of the Peace Society, Elizabeth Oakes Smith was an attentive listener, for she was early imbued with the spirit of the reformer and later gave herself heart and soul to advocating the emancipation of her own sex.

Religious discussions in Portland drew the attention of many earnest souls. Universalism and Unitarianism had already made some stir, and all denominational questions were seriously debated.

> Rev. Bennet Tyler [Mrs. Oakes Smith writes in her autobiography] spoke to crowded houses upon the Trinity of God and Rev. Ichabod Tyler upon the Unity of God, and Rev. Mr. Streeter turned the devil and hell-fire into contempt and ridicule. Everybody went out to hear, and everybody talked and studied and took sides.[6]

In addition to political, moral, and religious contentions there was another influence making itself felt which produced an excitement just as intense, if of quite a different sort. During the thirties many of the prominent citizens in Portland as well as in other parts of Maine were seized by more than an ordinary desire to make money. This was chiefly a result of the land craze, which was rife all over the country, particularly in the West. In Maine large areas of wild land were secured by men who sold to capitalists sections which were disposed of in successive sales at great profit. Many gained wealth in a comparatively short time, and the temptation to speculate seized numbers who could ill afford to lose. Seba Smith, who had remained clear-headed and unmoved in the midst of political broils and religious dissensions, found himself swept into this whirl of

[6] *Selections from the Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith*, p. 61.

buying and selling almost unawares. Although popular as a writer and fairly prosperous, he longed for the good fortune of his acquaintances who were engaging in land deals, and at an inopportune time, in 1837, he staked all that he had and lost.[7] The selling of his interest in the *Portland Courier* was one of the results of this misadventure.[8]

It was a serious problem they faced then to bring up and educate five little boys, one an infant in arms. One possible solution offered by Mrs. Oakes Smith is mentioned in her autobiography.

> Mr. Smith [she writes] was large owner in a Township, which on the maps of the day figured as No 8. This, like the rest, would be lost unless we preserved a claim upon it by settling; squatting upon it was the term. I was young, but I had lived long enough to feel that a parent should sacrifice himself for the good of his children, and I begged and implored my husband to leave all, take our library, chattels, and children, go into the wilderness, build up a log cabin, and there live, educate, and bring up our four boys to manly toil and simple habits. I was greatly earnest in this, and as I look back I have not a doubt of the feasibility and excellence of the plan. It had an Arcadian beauty to me, and a sweetness of solitude that would enable me to study, which I so much desired. I would willingly have turned my back upon the world and given myself to the simple duty of educating my children, who with the natural rise of property as population advanced would be rich men. No 8 is now the centre of a region covered with prosperous villages.[9]

Such a life might have pleased her husband, but he was reared in a log cabin and understood the hardships involved;

[7] The only reference to this speculation which it has been possible to find is in Mrs. Oakes Smith's autobiography, and she offers no more information than is here given. *Selections from the Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith,* p. 73.

[8] Announced in the *Portland Courier and Family Reader* (then a weekly), May 17, 1837.

[9] Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith in MS., pp. 362–363.

he also knew his wife and her need of social contacts, and wisely decided that the scheme would not be feasible.

The home of Seba Smith's parents was at this time in Boothbay, a seaport town, and there the family went for a season while deciding what to do next. At this period Rolvin, the second son, a beautiful child of seven years, died as the result of an accident, and for a time the mother's grief shut out all interests in her life outside the home. Feeling that his livelihood must depend largely on his literary efforts, Seba Smith worked steadily during his sojourn by the sea, writing sketches and poems, some of which were later published. One novel, *Esther Wylie,* based on local history in Portland, was discarded after it was written, but at least half of his long Indian poem, *Powhatan,* was completed during this period as well as two of his *'Way Down East* stories, which were published and collected in one volume in 1854.

In a brief account of Seba Smith and his work, Professor J. S. Hart has said of him: "Few men were more equable under misfortune"; [10] but though this was true, he was also still unwary in financial affairs, and was soon to be caught again. At Boothbay he became interested in an invention of his sister's husband, Mr. Beath, a sea-captain's son with some mechanical genius, who had devised a machine to cleanse the long fibers of Sea Island cotton. For such an invention the Southern planters had offered large rewards. Although Beath's machine was expensive and complicated in its operation, Seba Smith was so confident of its success that, in order to introduce it, he took his last thousand dollars for a journey with his family to South Carolina. There was every reason to regret their departure from the city they loved, and it must have caused a pang at the mother's heart to leave the little mound on Bram Hall Hill. In her auto-

[10] J. S. Hart, *Manual of American Literature,* Phila., 1873, p. 450.

biography Mrs. Oakes Smith expresses her feelings as she faced an uncertain future and went out from the town which for twenty-five years had been her home.

In leaving Portland [she writes], I had a superstitious feeling that I had left all that was desirable in a locality behind me. My heart clung to its frosty air, rocky hills, and mountain scenery, and more than all to the friends of my childhood and youth.[11]

It was mid-winter in 1839 when Seba Smith, his family, including four boys from two to ten years of age, and his brother-in-law started from Boston in the packet-ship *King Philip* for the South. In her journal his wife describes the fearful storm that overtook them at sea, and though apprehensive of failure in their enterprise, she did not miss the thrill of adventure, which seemed to her a welcome change after the monotonous cares and worries of the preceding year.

It is beyond me [she says] to describe the grandeur of the scene. We were "laying to" under close reefed canvas, the wind howling and shrieking and we, now engulfed in the bottom of the abysm of sea, and anon riding upon the crest. I needed just this tonic. Looking to the top mast there was a pale blue flame, spectre-like, shining through the darkness. It was all terrible, but how much better than the dull, desponding hours of every day care. It was luxury to feel heroic even for a short space of time. The rain came down in torrents and I was wet to the back-bone, but joyous.[12]

In Charleston the family became acquainted with some wealthy planters and their wives who were spending the winter in the city, boarding at the same house where Seba Smith, with high hopes of good fortune, secured temporary lodgings. Here Mrs. Oakes Smith learned something of Southern customs and, with all the preconceived opinions of a Northern woman, observed for the first time the insti-

[11] *Selections from the Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith*, p. 76.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 76.

tution of slavery. Her pity for the slaves and her frequent arguments with Southerners as to the injustice of their bonds turned her mind for a while from the anticipation of her own misfortune. Soon a meeting of planters was arranged to give the machine a fair trial. When the blow came and Seba Smith and his brother returned to say that the machine had been declared to be impracticable, Elizabeth Oakes Smith rallied all her forces to brace up the partners in failure. Next morning at ten o'clock the family took passage in the packet-ship *Lafayette* for New York. Fortunately, a cousin of Mrs. Oakes Smith's, living there, was ready to welcome them and able to offer them a home for a short period.

Their hostess, Maria Child Weeks, wife of a physician practising in the city, was a woman of culture who could well appreciate the literary aspirations of her cousins. She introduced them to her circle of friends, and they soon discovered acquaintances from Portland, who found conditions in New York more favorable than in Maine for pursuing literary work. There was Mrs. Ann S. Stephens, a contributor to and editor of popular magazines; there were also William Cutter, Isaac MacLellan, and Grenville Mellen, all writers of verse, the last alone in any way distinguished. The wife of Samuel Colman, a well-known New York publisher, and the first to get out Longfellow's *Hyperion* in 1839, was a native of Portland. In the distress of Grenville Mellen's later years, after the death of his wife, he was gladly welcomed in the Colman home, where he died in 1841. In Colman's *Miscellany*, a short-lived magazine, edited by Grenville Mellen and William Cutter, and not started until the summer of 1839, there were to be contributions from various Maine writers including Seba Smith.[13]

[13] His was *Christopher Crotchet, the Village Singing-Master,* for July, 1839.

One of Mrs. Oakes Smith's early experiences in New York was attending a lecture given by Frances Wright, the first woman in America to take up public speaking as a profession.[14] She had been married to Monsieur d'Arusmont in France during 1838, but separated from him shortly after, and at this time, in the winter of 1839, was using her maiden name. Because of the severe criticism of Frances Wright's views on religion and politics and the general disfavor in which she was held, Dr. and Mrs. Weeks tried to dissuade their cousin from going to hear her. Mrs. Oakes Smith succeeded at length, however, in securing her husband's reluctant company to the rather unsavory neighborhood of Clinton Hall, where these lectures were given on Sunday evening.

I remember [she says in a sketch of Frances Wright] we went up stairs and turned into a very dirty, dimly-lighted hall, filled with straight wooden benches, and only three persons in it. The appointed hour had already arrived, and slowly, men, one after another, sauntered in — several women, also, some with babes in their arms, and all bringing an atrocious odor of tobacco, whiskey, and damp clothing. At length, there might have been fifty persons, not more, present, and these began to shuffle and call for the speaker. It was all so much more gross and noisy that anything I had ever encountered where a woman was concerned, that I grew quite distressed, and the bad atmosphere nearly made me faint, but I was too eager to hear to admit the idea of going out.

Finally, the door in the rear of the desk opened, and a neat foot was placed upon the platform, for in those days the skirt of a woman's dress was ample in breadth but brief in length. She was a full-sized woman, handsomely shaped, dressed in black silk with plain linen collar and cuffs. Her head was large but not handsome, forehead low, but broad, indicating force and executive ability. She wore her hair short, but it could hardly be said to curl, waving slightly. Her features were all good, and the smile, sweet with a touch of feminine sadness, eyes well set under the broad, not high, brow, which was marked by long horizontal lines. She was pale,

[14] Cf. W. R. Waterman, *Frances (Wright) Darusmont,* N. Y., 1924.

but not sallow, and there were an earnestness and wholesomeness about Fanny Wright that made their way to the mind and heart.[15]

No doubt this experience helped Elizabeth Oakes Smith to recognize her own capacity for work in the lecture field, which she did not enter until more than ten years later.

During their first years in New York Seba Smith and his family took lodgings in Greenwich Street, which was nearest the heart of the city. To secure the means of livelihood, both he and his wife forged their way into literary work. When times were hard, they added to their slender income by taking boarders, and found it profitable to move into a larger house at 65 Murray Street. Manhattan was not then densely settled as at present, but was divided, at least by name, into several villages, such as Greenwich, Bloomingdale, and Harlem. Mrs. Oakes Smith writes in her autobiography of taking walks with her children at this time to the outskirts of New York, or what is now the locality beyond 33rd Street, "where there were rocks and fields with here and there wild flowers and grazing sheep." The business and residential districts were, however, constantly expanding. Among the new buildings going up was the Church of the Messiah in Broadway opposite Waverley Place, which Philip Hone describes as the resort for the fashionable set in the city, who listened to "very pretty moral sermons" by Dr. Dewey, the Unitarian pastor. He evidently preached also to the more serious-minded, for Horace Greeley was a regular attendant and the Smiths were introduced here by Mrs. Maria Weeks.

At receptions held in the home of Dr. Dewey, Seba Smith and his wife became acquainted with many people of literary and artistic ability. It was here that they met Thomas Cole, one of America's best landscape painters, whose two

[15] *Selections from the Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith*, p. 84.

series of pictures, "The Course of Empire" and "The Voyage of Life," may be seen now respectively in the rooms of the New York Historical Society and in Saint Luke's Hospital. Thomas J. Bryan, who made a valuable collection of paintings from the old masters, Mrs. Oakes Smith sketches in some detail in her autobiography. These works of art, now owned by the New York Historical Society, were exhibited in the forties in Mr. Bryan's own rooms on Broadway near 13th Street.

The lower end of New York had been up to this time the centre of its theatre district. On Broadway near Beekman Street was one of the most popular of the better class playhouses, the Park Theatre. Rates of admission ranged from $.25 in the gallery to $.50 in the pit, and $1.00 in boxes; and cheaper prices for melodrama and vaudeville on Saturday evenings at the Bowery and at the Olympic theatres, where seats in the pit were $.12, brought large audiences of newsboys and the poorest classes in the city. It is not probable that the Smiths had either time or money for such theatre-going as would suit their taste; but Mrs. Oakes Smith must have heard enough of the doings in the dramatic world to inspire her own play-writing, in which she was seriously engaged by 1849.

The greatest actors and actresses of England had visited America repeatedly since 1820; and Edmund Kean and his son Charles, Macready, and Charles Kemble and his daughter Fanny were familiar figures in New York. Macready was in the city twice during the forties: in 1843 and 1844, when he made a prosperous tour over the United States, and again in 1849, when his success was marred by a riot, instigated presumably by Edwin Forrest and his followers. Since the early twenties Forrest had competed with England's most skilled artists in this country, and certainly in the thirties and forties most successfully; but this disturb-

ance and a similar attempt to interfere with his performance in London in 1845 were a discredit to both actors, between whom there was some jealousy, and to their countrymen. Charles Kean, who married the actress Ellen Tree and was with her in America from 1845 to 1847, seems to have experienced no such discomfiture through professional rivalry.

Kean, Forrest, and Macready all played the tragic rôles in Shakespeare, which since the early part of the century had found favor with the public. The record of the theatre season in Philadelphia in 1811 and 1812, when one fourth of the plays produced were Shakespeare's,[16] is an indication of the popular demand for the older English drama, which did not diminish in the next three decades. At the Bowery Theatre in the late forties dramatizations of the English novels *Jane Eyre* and *The Last Days of Pompeii* drew full houses. Native plays were not lacking; but many of these showed definitely the influence of French melodrama, as for instance Boucicault's *Poor of New York* and Mrs. Mowatt's *Fashion.* In the latter, a satire on life of the day, one gets a real flavor of the time in such characterizations as the ridiculous Mrs. Tiffany, aping French customs and mouthing French words most absurdly to set the fashion, and the lovely heroine, Gertrude, irresistible in spite of her sentimentality.[17]

The year 1842, when the theatre season was rather slack, was made memorable by the honors done Dickens during his first visit to America. The Boz Ball, given at the Park Theatre on February 14, was the event of the winter. Cos-

[16] A. H. Quinn, *A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War,* New York and London, 1923, p. 162.

[17] This play, which was produced with great success at the Park Theater, is called by Professor Quinn not the first but perhaps the most significant social comedy. That it had more than a temporary appeal is proved by its successful run in the Greenwich Village playhouse the winter of 1924.

tumers and tailors were busy for weeks ahead, as the moderate price of tickets at $5.00 a couple made it possible for many to attend. The committee of citizens directing the ball spent $2500 on decorations and placed in the gallery pictures of all the United States Presidents down to Van Buren. The stage was made to represent an Elizabethan chamber, on each panel of which a tableau from Dickens's work was drawn by Hillyard, the scene painter of the house. With these as a background Dickens and his wife appeared over the footlights shortly after nine o'clock and were introduced by Philip Hone to the company assembled. The latter writes of Dickens that he was a "small bright-eyed intelligent looking young fellow, thirty years of age, somewhat of a dandy in his dress."[18] Reports indicate that he was dumbfounded when at Hone's call for nine cheers an enthusiastic response came from nearly three thousand throats. Although the novelist's reputation at the time was great enough for him to have become accustomed to extended ovations, he was evidently not prepared for the heartiness of our American democracy.

At the Dickens dinner given at the City Hotel on February 18, some seven or eight hundred guests were present. Irving sat at the head of the table with Dickens on his left. Among other well-known citizens were Bryant, Halleck, Charles Augustus Davis, and Philip Hone. Irving's after-dinner toast to Dickens and the latter's reply were filled with mutual compliments and indicated very pleasant relations between England and America on literary matters, a welcome change since 1820 and Sidney Smith's contemptuous query, ". . . who reads an American book?" This was the occasion of Davis's Downing letter to Dickens, which has already been mentioned. In referring to Davis as masquerad-

[18] *The Diary of Philip Hone,* edited by Bayard Tuckerman, N. Y., 1889, Vol. II, p. 118.

ing in false colors, Seba Smith admits that he himself was not at the dinner. It seems even less likely that he attended the ball four days earlier, as functions of this sort were not to his mind, and at this period he and his wife had more practical uses for their time and money.

Like their Portland friends the Smiths found in New York not merely wider opportunities for writing but a greater stimulus in the presence of men and women who were distinguished literary figures at this period. During the forties Bryant was still regarded by many as the first poet in America, although his time was mainly occupied in editorial duties on the *Evening Post*. In 1844 Poe arrived in New York and earned a meagre subsistence by newspaper writing, which was not substantially increased when in the following year with the publication of *The Raven* he achieved fame and the homage of an admiring public. Walt Whitman was a vagrant figure at this time, but since 1839 his newspaper work in Brooklyn and New York had been to him not only a means of livelihood, but a definite preparation for his songs of democracy. He was quite unknown, however, in polite literary circles where the polished and witty Nathaniel P. Willis was lionized and where in the late forties Bayard Taylor, whose tramps through Europe had not taken him into the fashionable society enjoyed by Willis, was yet welcomed with interest. Among other well-known figures in the forties were the minor poet Richard Henry Stoddard, the humorist from Vermont, John G. Saxe, and the literary critics E. P. Whipple and Margaret Fuller. To Mrs. Oakes Smith, who was to find her chief mission in life the advocating of more authority for her sex, the position of Margaret Fuller as the first literary critic of the *Tribune* must have seemed significant. Her keen judgment and broad knowledge of books paved the way for succeeding editors of distinguished ability.

While her boys were growing up, Mrs. Oakes Smith kept busy with her pen whenever possible. Her literary undertakings contributed largely toward the family support; yet she tried at the same time to give some attention to her children's education. "Many and many was the school lesson," she writes in her autobiography, "I gave my boys, and the magazine article I wrote seated upon the moss-covered rocks that over-look the Hudson river." [19]

The forties were propitious years for those who were seeking a market for magazine work. During this time innumerable periodicals were launched throughout the country; some continued successfully through a number of years; others died out after a few issues. In New York, a camping ground for the major and minor literati of America, a large number of these publications flourished and gave space to writers of varying merit. The Smiths early learned the character of material demanded by the many magazines afloat, and directed their energies to satisfying the requirements of various editors.

The *New York Mirror*, started by George P. Morris and Samuel Woodworth in 1823, had first rank among weeklies, especially after Willis joined its staff in 1831, at the age of twenty-five. That same year he set out on his travels abroad and sent to the *Mirror* letters which were later published in a volume under the title *Pencillings by the Way*. The *Mirror* was ostensibly devoted to literature and the fine arts, and yet had space for humor of a popular type like that of the Downing letters. Morris, the writer of simple home songs, such as "Woodman, spare that tree," appealed probably more than the fastidious Willis, to the hearts of the people. During the paper's existence of twenty-two years it changed its name twice: first, in 1843, to the *New Mirror*, and then, in the following year, to the *Evening Mirror*, when it was issued as a daily with a special weekly edition.

[19] Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith in MS. pp. 444–445.

Following soon after the *Mirror,* which was sold in 1846, came *The Home Journal* with which Morris and Willis, playfully known as "Mi Boy and the Brigadier," were connected practically as long as they lived. This paper catered to the interests of polite and refined society and continued from 1846 until 1901, when it was transformed into *Town and Country.* In referring to *The Journal* in her autobiography, Mrs. Oakes Smith says, "It was an original idea of Mr. Willis to establish a paper that should be the medium of gentle usages, refined culture, and what is exquisite in taste and beauty." [20]

Many of the weeklies of that day were folios of four pages and hence resembled newspapers in appearance. *The New Yorker,* for example, was a literary venture of Horace Greeley's commenced in 1834 and given up when he started, for the Harrison campaign, *The Log Cabin,* which was in turn supplanted in 1841 by the *Tribune. The New World,* beginning in 1840, and *Brother Jonathan,* in 1842, were weeklies somewhat similar in form. In the first, edited by Park Benjamin, news appeared under the headings *World of Art, Musical, Dramatic, Literary,* and *Medical World,* and *The Old World,* the last containing material from a London correspondent. Among the contributions in the literary department were occasional dramas in verse and some fiction by the popular writer G. P. R. James. *Brother Jonathan,* of which Seba Smith and John Neal were editors at different times, varied from *The New World* mainly in having less political news and fewer illustrations. It followed the popular magazines of the day in its variety of departments, and included some valuable articles by Cooper. *The Broadway Journal,* starting in 1845 and lasting only a year, belongs also in this group, although it was distinguished from other weeklies in that it aimed to include, principally, original ar-

[20] *Selections from the Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith,* p. 105.

ticles. Briggs, the first editor, was for a time assisted by Poe, who was full editor for six months and for a shorter time proprietor of the paper.[21]

Of the monthly magazines *The Knickerbocker,* founded in 1833 and edited by Charles Fenno Hoffman, who was succeeded within a year by Lewis Gaylord Clark,[22] was the most important in New York and undoubtedly one of the best in the country. The object of the monthly, Hoffman wrote, was to represent life and letters then existing. In its fifty years of continuance this purpose was carried out; one may read in its early numbers many sketches by Irving, Paulding, and their circle, in its later issues the prose or verse of Howells and Aldrich. Some of Major Downing's Yankee sketches also found their first lodging here. Other magazines which printed material of a distinctly literary character were *Sargent's New Monthly,* which lived only a few months in 1843, and in whose pages one finds the names of Tuckerman, Paulding, Whittier, Holmes, and Hawthorne, and *The Union Magazine,* edited during 1847 and 1848 by Mrs. Kirkland, who had been a pioneer settler of Michigan and the author of *A New Home — Who'll Follow?* In the latter monthly, which was changed in 1849 to *Sartain's Magazine* and then published in Philadelphia, are articles by John G. Saxe, Bayard Taylor, Mrs. Lydia Maria Child, Greeley, and Poe.

Snowden's *Ladies' Companion,* beginning in New York in 1834, and designated by Poe as a "milk and water concern," was one of the most popular monthlies, publishing mainly sentimental sketches by minor writers. As the tales of Seba Smith and his wife were not lacking in this quality, they found a market here. The magazine continued for

[21] *The Rover,* started by Seba Smith and Lawrence Labree in 1843, and continued until 1845, will be treated in a later chapter.

[22] *The Cambridge History of American Literature,* Vol. II, p. 167.

about ten years until the death of Snowden, when in 1844 *The Columbian Lady's and Gentleman's Magazine* was started on similar lines, Mrs. Ann S. Stephens being one of the chief contributors. Various means were used in the magazines of the day to catch the public eye. One characteristic feature was the elaborate fashion plate introduced by Godey, and usually colored as well as engraved; another attraction to be found in the last few pages of periodicals was the popular song with its musical accompaniment.

Although magazines of all varieties were edited in New York, at least three of the most important to which the Smiths made occasional contributions, were published elsewhere. These were *Godey's Lady's Book, Graham's Magazine,* and *The Southern Literary Messenger.*

Godey's Lady's Book, started in Philadelphia in 1821, had its widest circulation from 1837 until 1877 when Mrs. Sarah J. Hale was literary editor. Mrs. Hale was a woman from New England, very much interested in philanthropy as well as in literary movements of the day. She was one of the first to encourage women to take up medicine as a profession, and it was partly through her suggestions and influence that $50,000 was raised to complete Bunker Hill monument and that Thanksgiving was first made a national festival by Lincoln in 1864. Before 1837 she had edited *The Ladies' Magazine* in Boston, for which Mrs. Oakes Smith had written, and which was merged in *Godey's Lady's Book* when Mrs. Hale became editor of the latter. Miscellaneous remarks on history, medicine, books, and current happenings under the *Editor's Table,* and practical essays on domestic economy from Mrs. Hale's pen show her sound common sense. In addition she gave her readers the chit-chat of fashions with illustrative engravings and popular songs with music. The contributors included many of the first writers of the period.

Graham's Magazine represents the typical life and letters of the time. It has many engravings and genuinely Parisian fashion plates attractively colored and accompanied by explanations in French. There are various contributions by English writers, which were all original, among them poems by Mrs. Browning, and valuable original work by American men of letters, as for instance many of Poe's tales and criticisms. This magazine was a continuation of *The Casket* combined with Burton's *Gentleman's Magazine,* which came under Mr. Graham's control in December, 1841. The following April Poe was made editor and continued until May, 1842, when his place was taken by Rufus Griswold, who shortly before had been occupied in compiling material for his *Poets and Poetry of America,* the most important anthology of native poets during the period.

The Southern Literary Messenger of Richmond, begun by Thomas W. White in 1834 and ending some thirty years later, has also much of Poe's early work, as he was at one time its editor. His startling stories and criticism did much to give this periodical its high reputation and influence. One finds in its pages not only the names of Southern writers such as John Esten Cooke, Simms, and Poe but also those of Tuckerman, Griswold, James T. Fields, and Bryant. Aside from purely literary matter it contains historical sketches and essays on national affairs.

It is evident that a wide field for literary endeavor was open to both Seba Smith and Mrs. Oakes Smith. The *New York Mirror* was the first to recognize the humorist from Portland and on February 23, 1839, *Letters of John Smith, Esquire,* already discussed, made their appearance in this weekly. John Smith began the series by telling why he would not change his name, and there is a suggestion here of what actually happened in the Smith family, when Mrs. Oakes Smith tried to prevail upon her husband to change the

name to Oaksmith, as Oakes was a family name on her side of the house, one ancestor, Reverend Uriah Oakes, having been President of Harvard in 1675. Seba Smith was quite satisfied with the name as it stood and refused, but his wife succeeded in having the children's name legally changed to Oaksmith and came to be generally known herself as Elizabeth Oakes Smith.

Greeley's *New Yorker*,[23] Park Benjamin's *New World*,[24] and *Brother Jonathan* [25] were other weeklies in which Seba Smith's work appeared. All his contributions to these papers had a strong Down East flavor, and, as has been noticed, one Downing letter was published in *The New World* for June 13, 1840.

The Knickerbocker, the most important of the New York monthlies, introduced him in April, 1839, as the original Major Jack Downing with a tale of Maine life,[23] which together with similar stories appearing in a later issue of this magazine,[26] in *The Ladies' Companion*,[27] in *Burton's Magazine*,[28] and in *Godey's Lady's Book* [29] were collected into a volume called *'Way Down East* and published in 1854. A detailed discussion of these is given in a later chapter. Stories of pioneer life in Maine evidently caught the interest of magazine readers at this time. *The Ups and Downs of Lot Wyman*, a series of tales in *The Ladies' Companion* from October, 1842, to April, 1843, show local color in the vivid picture of early dissensions between Methodists and Baptists and of the very real danger Down East from the proximity of bears. These sketches are so close to the soil, however, in

[23] *The Trespasser in Maine*, Apr. 13, 1839.
[24] *Jack Downing's Second Life*, June, 1840.
[25] *Sachem Squando*, Apr., 1843.
[26] *Jerry Guttridge's Reformation*, July, 1839.
[27] *Seating the Parish*, May, 1843.
[28] *The Money Diggers*, Aug., 1840.
[29] *Cure of a Hypochondriac, Godey's Lady's Book*, Feb., 1840.

their depiction of Yankee character that the charm belonging to imaginative fiction is lost.

Seba Smith's interest in Indian material resulted in an extended treatment of *The Religion and Superstitions of the North American Indians,* published in a series of six articles in the *Literary Emporium* for 1846. Much of his information he had secured from Schoolcraft and from missionaries or military men who had been in close contact with the Indians. Their belief in the rebirth of departed spirits is shown in his description of funeral rites among the Pawnee Indians. By reference to various tribes he indicates their strong religious feeling, though they are slow to accept the Christian faith. Red Jacket, chief of the Senecas, is quoted at length. At a religious meeting in Buffalo in 1805 he had rejected the advances of Christian missionaries and with a fine irony veiled by his simplicity had said the Indians would wait first and see the effect of the white men's religion on their character. As poems, tales, and novels concerned with the Indian were numerous during the thirties and forties and were received with popular favor, a study of Indians such as this published in *The Literary Emporium* was sure of an audience.

In the three leading monthlies of the day Seba Smith's sketches of New England life were well represented. *The Southern Literary Messenger* for January, 1840, published some careful research he had made entitled *Gleanings from Early New England History* and in June, 1839, a tale concerned with local character in Maine.[30] One story, published in *Graham's Magazine* for October, 1847, and not included in the volume *'Way Down East,* takes off in an amusing fashion the blue laws in Maine about 1640. It is entitled *The General Court and Jane Andrews' Firkin of Butter.* Because she sold a firkin of butter having stones weighing

[30] *Uncle Pete and the Bear.*

fourteen pounds in it, Jane Andrews is condemned to stand in the most conspicuous part of a public hall during town meeting with a placard on which her offence was written in capital letters, fastened on her forehead. Her mortifying position is almost forgotten in the humorous treatment of the bystanders:

> Everybody, as he went into the town-house, turned square round, and stood and looked Mrs. Andrews in the face several minutes, and read the inscription on her forehead. Old Deacon White, who was rather long-sighted, put on his spectacles and stood facing her, about a yard off, and read the inscription over three times, loud enough to be heard all over the room. And long-legged, razor-faced Peter Johnson, who was very short-sighted, put on his spectacles and stood so near her to read the inscription, that his nose almost touched hers, causing some rather rude and irreverent laughs among the younger portion of the multitude.[31]

Probably this type of story based on early New England history represents the best of Seba Smith's magazine work.

In order to have better opportunities for literary work, the Smiths gave up their house in Murray Street in 1842 and moved to South Brooklyn, where in the forties and fifties many of the younger writers settled, as they could live more economically than in Manhattan. In a letter to Griswold at this time, dated August 11, 1842, Seba Smith says:

> I have been obliged to relinquish the house we kept in Murray street to accommodate boarders, which proved to be both an irksome and unprofitable business. I am now thrown back again upon my pen for support — rather precarious business for main dependence; it will do for a staff, but not for a crutch. However, since Mrs. Smith and myself have each a staff, if we walk together I hope we may be able to keep from falling.

None of Mrs. Oakes Smith's writings have been found in the popular weeklies circulated in New York, but her name

[31] *Graham's Magazine,* Vol. XXXI, p. 173. (Oct., 1847.)

appeared as early as her husband's in the current monthlies published there and elsewhere. *The Southern Literary Messenger* for November, 1839, contained a poem entitled *The Water;* a few lines indicate the delicate fancy which was a characteristic of her verse:

> A dainty thing the water is,
> It loves the flowret's cup,
> To nestle mid the odors there
> And fill its petals up — [32]

By far her most important contribution to this magazine was *The Sinless Child,* which came out in the issues for January and February, 1842, and first brought her distinction as a poet. After this publication she used instead of the signature Mrs. Seba Smith the name by which she wished henceforth to be known, Elizabeth Oakes Smith. In her journal she wrote that the former mode of address she did not like for a literary woman capable of achieving distinction in her own right. The use of her husband's name also caused some confusion between her work and his, which she naturally wished to avoid. In the November number of *The Southern Literary Messenger* for 1840 she answered a defence of Shelley written by Tuckerman for the June issue. With less understanding than he of the motives underlying the poet's conduct and with less appreciation of his idealism, Mrs. Oakes Smith undertook a similar task in attempting to judge Shelley, the poet, by examining Shelley, the man. Her conclusions bear a striking resemblance to those reached by more distinguished critics in England [33] and America,[34] who questioned the importance of Shelley's art because they disapproved of his life.

[32] Vol. V, p. 720. [33] Cf. Matthew Arnold on Shelley.

[34] Cf. Lowell's introduction to the 1857 edition of Shelley's poems. Cf. Mark Twain, *Defence of Harriet Shelley,* in *How to Tell a Story and other Essays,* N. Y., 1899.

From 1839 to 1842 at least ten of Mrs. Oakes Smith's tales or sketches in prose and nine poems were published in *The Ladies' Companion.* Many of them were inspired by her own life and experiences in Maine and New York. Probably the best of these contributions is the series centred in the character of Zeke Dyer, a real person familiar to her in her youth, whom she convincingly describes as a jolly old tar with twinkling eyes, very popular among the children, and fond of his grog and tobacco. In his weird tales of spooks and mermaids as precursors of distress or shipwreck, she emphasizes, however, the superstition of the old sea dog rather more than his comic nature. *The Story of Niskayah* in the same magazine for September, 1840, is one of her first attempts to use Indian legends in romantic fiction. Her skill is more evident in characterization than in plot, as is seen later in *The Western Captive,* a novel based on the life of Tecumseh. In this story written for *The Ladies' Companion,* the maid Niskayah arouses one's admiration and sympathy when in her captivity she awaits her doom at the stake with proud courage, shadowed at intervals by natural human fears. The plot itself ending in Niskayah's rescue by the marauding chief who has taken her captive and who finally wins her love, is time-worn; but the tumult of her feelings, passing from pride and hate to fear and love, is pictured with striking effect.

The sentimentality of the period is illustrated in many of Mrs. Oakes Smith's contributions to *The Ladies' Companion* as well as to other popular monthlies of the day such as *The Columbian Magazine, Sartain's Magazine,* and *Godey's Lady's Book.* For the last magazine she wrote constantly during ten years or more, in which time at least ten tales or sketches and eighteen poems appeared from her pen. In *The Opal Ring* for January and February, 1840, she catered to the public taste in the amount of sentiment and emotion ex-

pressed, and attempted to add to these sighs and tears the paraphernalia of the tale of terror, using as a setting a castle on the Rhine, where in ancient days a Crusader is bewitched by his love for an Arab maid. Unrequited love, a favorite theme in many of the current magazine stories, was frequently the basis of Mrs. Oakes Smith's tales, and these were often set in the parts of Maine with which she was familiar.

In most of the magazines for which Seba Smith and Elizabeth Oakes Smith wrote, it has been seen that the latter's contributions were more numerous than her husband's. *Graham's Magazine,* one of the most important of this period, was no exception to others in this respect. From October, 1842, to September, 1845, at least seven of her poems, three essays, and a story appeared in its current issues. In her tale of *Jack Spanker and the Mermaid,* one of the Uncle Zeke series, for August, 1842, she chose a subject appealing to contemporary readers, who delighted in marvels and supernatural events. The mermaid, whether in poetry, children's stories, or romances was equally seductive and alluring. Uncle Zeke calls her Old Nick in disguise, but in his tale does not fail to show the charm of this fairy creature as she entices to her ocean palace the old tar, Jack Spanker. Zeke's characteristic drolleries and merriment are almost lost sight of here in the gloom which pervades his spirit as he recalls tragic events at sea, and among them the mysterious disappearance of Jack Spanker.

The two poems in *Graham's* for September of 1843 and October of the same year entitled *The Wife* and *Sympathy* indicate her attitude on life as well as her poetic method. The restrictions which she had early felt were unfairly placed upon the woman in the marriage contract, she alludes to in her lines from *The Wife:*

> All day, like a bright bird, content to sing
> In its cage, she moveth to and fro.[35]

[35] Vol. XIII, p. 159.

In his *Fabulous Forties* Meade Minnigerode makes clear that the sphere of woman at that period was undeniably the home. "Wives must in many cases have been unspeakably dull," he remarks by way of comment. "But then," he adds, "of course, the husbands were not obliged to remain at home, for were not theirs all the activities and authorities of life."[36] In *Sympathy,* signed by the pseudonym Helfenstein, which appeared with much of Mrs. Oakes Smith's prose and poetry, she has used a device similar to that employed by Browning in his monologues, picturing two characters by allowing one to speak and note the reaction of the other. Though her lines are often unfinished in form, her ideas are usually poetic, as in this stanza:

> Thus to sit with thee beside,
> With thy truthful, earnest eyes —
> Let the worst of fate betide,
> This is snatched from Paradise.[37]

In this same issue of *Graham's, A Word upon Conceitedness,* suggested by an engraving of Malvolio, offers an interesting comparison with a sketch by Seba Smith on the same subject, which came out in his magazine, *The Rover,* at about this time. He sets forth the situation in Olivia's household by taking off externals, as in his picture of the noisy rout silenced by Malvolio. Mrs. Oakes Smith, by seeming to enter into the consciousness of Maria, attempts to show with delicate humor the sources of her roguery; she also makes these circumstances the occasion for a strong condemnation of conceit in man.

In the winter of 1843 Charles Fenno Hoffman looked through a bundle of Mrs. Oakes Smith's printed magazine articles, which he said would have filled several volumes,

[36] *The Fabulous Forties, 1840-1850 a Presentation of Private Life,* p. 79. Courtesy of G. P. Putnam's Sons, Publishers, New York and London, 1924.

[37] Vol. XIII, p. 197.

though less than half what she had written, and made very favorable comments to Rufus Griswold in a letter of January 1, urging her qualifications for a place in his book on American prose writers. In a later letter, of June 12, to the same person, he wrote, "Mrs. Oakes Smith must according to your prophecy take a stand out of hooting distance of any other of our writing women — if her constitution be strong enough for the labor involved."

Hoffman's enthusiasm seemed to have little weight with Griswold. In the latter's books, *Prose Writers of America,* published in America and in England in 1847, three New England women, Margaret Fuller, Lydia Maria Child, and Catherine Sedgwick, were included, as well as Mrs. Kirkland, who wrote of her pioneer experiences in the West; but no space was given to Mrs. Oakes Smith. In his introduction, however, Griswold does give her this commendation: " Mrs. Oakes Smith is a woman of a most original and poetical mind, who has succeeded, perhaps better than any other person, in appreciating and developing the fitness of aboriginal tradition and mythology for the purposes of romantic fiction." [38] Schoolcraft was also interested in Mrs. Oakes Smith's imaginative use of Indian mythology; [39] and it was this type of narrative which constituted the most original and distinctive of her magazine articles.

It will be observed that during their first ten years in New York the Smiths wrote for the more important leading magazines as well as for the more obscure. Griswold states that no other periodical offered as much to distinguished native writers as *The Knickerbocker.*[40] Next to this, *Graham's*

[38] Rufus Griswold, *Prose Writers of America,* N. Y., 1847, p. 38.

[39] *Ibid.,* p. 300. Mrs. Oakes Smith contributed the tale *Machineton* to a chapter on mythology in Schoolcraft's *History, Condition, and Prospects of the American Indians,* Rochester, 1851.

[40] *Passages from the Correspondence of Rufus W. Griswold,* ed. by W. M. Griswold, Cambridge, Mass., 1898, p. 110.

Magazine, Godey's Lady's Book, and *The Ladies' Companion* appear to have paid the highest rates to their contributors, Graham and Godey often giving twelve dollars a page to their chief writers but hardly one fourth as much to other acceptable prose contributors.[41] Seba Smith writes that Mr. Godey paid him five dollars a page for the prose articles he furnished.[42] Magazine editors were severely criticized at the time as "dollar worshippers, judging by quantity rather than by quality and filling up their pages with work done for nothing."[43] It would appear that the *New York Mirror* and *Brother Jonathan* were among others deserving of this censure. Mr. Hamilton, the editor of *The Ladies' Companion,* stated that Willis earned $1200 a year writing for three magazines, of which *The Ladies' Companion* was one;[44] the amount earned annually in magazine writing by Seba Smith and Mrs. Oakes Smith combined, however, was probably considerably less.

The Smiths had now come to be recognized as members of that interesting circle called the literati of New York. Although Mrs. Oakes Smith made frequent visits to Portland, her Brooklyn friends vied with those of Maine in their devotion. She had her literary salon on Sunday evenings at Cheever Place, where her friends Mrs. Hale, Mrs. Osgood, Mrs. Whitman, Horace Greeley, Hoffman, Tuckerman, and many other distinguished people were guests.[45]

Among those she knew best as friends with whose poetic aspirations she sympathized, were Bryant and Poe. She

[41] *Ibid.,* p. 109.

[42] Letter to Griswold, Aug. 11, 1842.

[43] The *Nineteenth Century,* Vol. II, p. 733. (Jan., 1848.)

[44] Passages from the Correspondence of Rufus W. Griswold, p. 127.

[45] In a paper published in the *Patchogue Advance,* July 13, 1900, Wm. J. Bok writes that among the artists entertaining at these evening receptions were Edwin Forrest, Charlotte Cushman, Booth, Hackett, and Adelina Patti.

gives extended sketches of both in her autobiography, recalling with remarkable clearness a visit at Bryant's home in Roslyn, Long Island, where she was charmed by Mrs. Bryant's housewifely ministrations and impressed by her efficiency as the poet's helpmeet. With equal vividness she remembers Poe's conversation during calls at her home. He could not conceal there his delight at public recognition, and his craving for sympathy was met by her sincere interest and admiration.

The most generally attended literary gatherings of this period were held every Saturday evening at the home of Miss Anne Lynch, a very charming hostess, who let neither lack of wealth nor fashion affect her opinion of invited guests. Their eligibility rested solely on their individual gifts and worth. At these soirées the literati of New York, such as Bryant, Poe, Willis, and Hoffman, gathered and gave themselves up to the pleasures of social intercourse.

Poe [Mrs. Oakes Smith writes in describing him on these occasions], was military in his bearing, contracted by his temporary training at the West Point Academy. His slender form, pale, intellectual face, and weird expression of eye, never failed to arrest the attention of even the least observant. Always, everywhere he seemed out of place — a Hamlet amid the toils of fashion; and there was an unmistakable, cynical something about him that said: "Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery"; a suppressed egotism, a scarcely endured tolerance, a self-involved abstraction — native, not artificial. He spoke in a low voice, without any sympathetic vibration; yet it was one you listened to hear again. He did not affect the society of men, choosing rather that of highly intellectual women, with whom he liked to fall into a sort of eloquent monologue, half dream, half poetry. Men were intolerant of all this, but women fell under its fascination and listened in silence. I have seen the childlike face of Fannie Osgood suffused with tears under this wizard spell.[46]

[46] *Reminiscences, Baldwin's Monthly,* Vol. IX, p. 1. (Sept., 1874.)

Of Mrs. Frances Osgood, to whom Poe paid more than ordinary attention, Mrs. Oakes Smith has given an illuminating picture in her journal of November 7, 1855. After referring to four lines in her autograph written to the Sinless Child,

> When from your gems of thought I turn
> To these dark eyes, your heart to learn —
> I know not which I praise most high —
> The bright Idea or bright dear eye,[47]

she writes:

> This trifle brings Fanny vividly to my mind as I saw her that evening at Miss Lynch's; one of her brilliant receptions. She was then gay, and in her best health, which was always delicate. I met her bright, and yet mellow-beaming eye fixed upon me and she penned the above impromptu. She was always a child, the youngest woman I ever knew. In this respect she formed a marked contrast to Margaret Fuller, who stood near her, who always looked care-worn even to haggardness, and I think never enjoyed the triumphs of another. Fannie was generous, playful, and appreciative always. I remember I checked her for some little waywardness this evening, saying, "You are misunderstood, Fanny." She looked sad. "Yes, always by the dull and the envious — shelter me under your wing, Eva. I never can go the dignified." And she put her small thin hand in mine and slyly kissed my shoulder, like a child. I never think of her without a pang, for she was unjustly traduced by those who could not appreciate the purity of her heart.

Bayard Taylor's first entrance into the social life of New York was at such a literary assemblage in the parlors of Miss Lynch, when, he writes, Hoffman introduced him to the circle that gathered about Mrs. Seba Smith, the wife of Major Jack Downing, in Brooklyn. A little later Taylor

[47] This poem appeared in *The Broadway Journal,* addressed to Kate Carol, one of Mrs. Osgood's pen names, and was probably by Poe.

speaks of attending a grand valentine party at the same house, where the valentines assigned him to write included those for Mrs. Kirkland and Mrs. Seba Smith. He was doubtless thinking of these parties when in *John Godfrey's Fortunes* he spoke of attending receptions of a lady "whose tact, true refinement of character, and admirable culture drew around her all that was best in letters and in the arts." [48]

Some one less at home in the parlors of Miss Lynch than Bayard Taylor put in a New York paper after one of her soirées the following squib:

> The ladies are scattered all about as thick as stars; yet we do not know how to approach them. There is Mrs. Seba Smith bending aristocratically over the center-table and talking in a bright, cold, steady stream, like an antique fountain by moonlight.[49]

Another woman of poetic tastes whose home was a favorite resort for literary people was Mrs. Emma C. Embury of Brooklyn. Having had a higher education than most women of her time she early gained a reputation as a writer of verse when Maria Gowen Brooks, a protégé of Southey's, was practically the only other native woman poet aspiring to fame. Mrs. Embury's volume called *Guido and Other Poems*, of which *The Maid and her Spinning Wheel* was popular in her time, would be difficult to obtain today; but Mrs. Oakes Smith brings back with fresh interest the literary gatherings held at her house.

> Mrs. Embury [she writes] delighted to bring around her the wits of the day, and Charles F. Hoffman, Theodore Tuckerman, Julian C. Verplank . . . with John Keese [50] and others might often be met there.

[48] Bayard Taylor, *John Godfrey's Fortunes*, N. Y., 1864, p. 321.

[49] Undated clipping among Mrs. Oakes Smith's MSS.

[50] John Keese was a magazine writer, doing much critical and editorial work.

John Keese and John Saxe, being professional wits, were pleased with the acceptance everywhere awarded them, but I, not witty, always dead in earnest, tired of this play of words, and perhaps did not appreciate it. . . . I remember Fannie Osgood and Phoebe Carey rather excelled in this "small game," but Margaret Fuller looked like an owl at the perpetration of a pun, and I honored her for it.

John Keese, who was inexhaustible in his puns, used to sit in front of a mirror and smile at his own cleverness, and sing a comic song irresistibly, without a particle of voice, but his bright eyes and saturnine complexion set off well his small, lean figure, and gave point to his wit. His vanity was not disagreeable; it rarely is in any case, if coupled with good nature.[51]

On these occasions Mrs. Oakes Smith's escort was usually her eldest son Appleton, by this time grown to manhood. Seba Smith, who always preferred home to society, is not often mentioned at these gatherings; he was not unknown, however, to literary persons who assembled there. Taylor in his letters speaks of him among other distinguished literati he had met in New York, and writes on September 8, 1847, of going with Hoffman, Griswold, and Seba Smith to see Hiram Powers' statue of the Greek Slave, whose hand and arm, it is understood, were the counterpart of Mrs. Oakes Smith's. After this, Hoffman went with him to Brooklyn to the Smiths, "where he stayed until eleven o'clock, passing the time delightfully." [52]

It was perhaps not strange that in those days when valentine parties were in vogue and gentlemen invoked their muse in praise of fair ladies, men like Griswold and Seba Smith directed their energies to the editing of gift-books entitled *The Gift of Love, The Gift of Sentiment,* and *Dewdrops of the Nineteenth Century.* Still the sentimentality expressed in the contents as well as by the titles of these volumes

[51] *Selections from the Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith,* p. 91.

[52] *Life and Letters of Bayard Taylor,* N. Y., 1864, Vol. I, p. 100.

should not be considered peculiar to America, for this literary fashion, which commenced in England with the *Forget-me-not* in 1823, came originally, it seems, from Germany. In the United States, however, the fad of publishing such gift-books annually appears to have been even more popular than in England. It started in 1826 with the first *Atlantic Souvenir* of Philadelphia, and between 1846 and 1852 sixty volumes were issued on an average each year.[53]

As anthologies of that day were arranged with a view to moral improvement as well as to an exhibition of literary excellence, it is not surprising that clergymen took a hand in editing and writing for many of these annuals, and that titles such as *The Christian's Gift, The Christian's Keepsake,* and *The Religious Offering* were frequent. The intense agitation against slavery in New England was reflected in a volume of prose and poetry entitled *Liberty Bell.* The material in these gift-books ranges from Old Testament stories to humorous writings in prose and verse. Indian legends, historical romances, and sentimental love tales are plentifully sprinkled through their pages with much light and graceful poetry. Their importance today is due largely to the fact that in them selections from the first writers of the period, such as Hawthorne and Poe, often appeared for the first time.[53] Among the host of minor writers included in these annuals the Smiths' names appeared frequently during the forties.

Seba Smith contributed a number of times to these volumes from his stock-in-trade of Down East tales, and twice, in *The Portland Sketch Book* for 1836 and in *The Wintergreen,* edited by John Keese for 1844, he appeared as Major Jack Downing. The later selection is not, like the first, quoted from the Downing letters, but is a racy sketch of

[53] F. W. Faxon, *Literary Annuals and Gift-Books,* Boston, 1912, Preface, p. xii.

Uncle Joshua accompanying a picture of this illustrious relative. Many of Seba Smith's prose articles are suggested by engravings, as for instance several satirical pieces in *The Mayflower* for 1847, which was edited by Mrs. Oakes Smith. The mad scramble of the dogs for their morning meal in the picture entitled *The Hot Breakfast* and the burned noses resulting from their haste called forth an ironic protest against the abuse of an innocent race by comparing them to human beings who push and wrangle for worldly gain. Seba Smith's own choice of life is suggested in verse of his published in *The Christian Souvenir*, Boston, 1843. Worn perhaps by the struggles of their early years in New York, he may have turned wistfully to his wife's plans of setting up their claim in the wilderness of Maine and there rearing their sons. At least he seems to covet a quiet retreat close to nature, and adds:

> With the wife of my heart, and my joyous sons,
> And my book and my pen, here I'd rest,
> And the wealth and the power of earth's mightiest ones,
> Were they mine, could not make me more blest.

During the years from 1836 to 1856 his name appeared in a dozen or more gift-books, sometimes with several selections. Occasionally he followed the fashion of the day in writing prose or poetry based on Biblical sources as in *The Holy City* in *The Ladies' Diadem*, New York for 1853, and in the poem *The Pool of Bethesda* in *Dewdrops of the Nineteenth Century* for 1845. Of the last volume he was himself editor. This book shows in its preface the prevailing character of moral earnestness in the annuals. Seba Smith writes that the "title indicates its aim in selecting contributions having moral value, awakening sympathies of the heart, nourishing virtue, and having lightness, purity, and beauty." Aside from the ten selections by the editor and his wife, which,

except perhaps for two short poems by Mrs. Oakes Smith, had appeared earlier, there were reprinted poems or prose articles by Longfellow, Bryant, Whittier, Leigh Hunt, and Thomas Hood.

As one finds a reflection of the thought and feeling of her own day in Elizabeth Oakes Smith's writings more definitely than in her husband's, one would expect to see her name more frequently than Seba Smith's in these popular publications. She did, in fact, contribute to at least three times as many gift-books — to some thirty-six between the years 1836 and 1856; in six of these, including the two edited by herself and her husband, their names appeared together. Griswold, who edited two volumes in 1854 representing both English and American poets, chose to honor Mrs. Oakes Smith by giving space to her work in each. In his *Gift of Love,* which contains poetic passages grouped under various headings and ranging from Shakespeare, Milton, and Byron to Longfellow and Willis, she is represented by a sonnet under Ambition entitled *The Unattained* and by stanzas under Love, but unfortunately each falls short of her best work in poetry. Among her contributions to magazines and annuals no short poem is better than *The Drowned Mariner* in *The Token* for 1842. The vigorous swing of these lines picturing a tragedy at sea is repeated in the bold characterization of the merry revellers in *The Summons Answered,* from the same annual for 1844. Perhaps the variety of her moods in poetry is what impresses one most in looking through her work in the annuals. In contrast to a daintiness and airy lightness in much of her verse are the more serious, reflective stanzas frequently signed by the name Helfenstein.

In *The Opal,* which was edited alternately by Mrs. Sarah J. Hale and by John Keese from 1844 to 1849, Mrs. Oakes Smith's name regularly appeared with poems, Biblical sketches, and tales. Probably her best prose contribution is

the Indian legend entitled *Beloved of the Evening Star* for 1847. This tragic story of a captive maid who is loved by a chief's son, ends dramatically as she dashes herself to death over a precipice. *The Opal,* like *The Token,* published in Boston, and *The Gift,* in Philadelphia, contained selections from the most reputable American men of letters. Among the minor writers included in all three annuals Mrs. Oakes Smith held a worthy place.

From 1849 to 1852 she contributed both prose and poetry to *The Odd Fellow's Offering,* an annual continuing for twelve years from 1843 to 1855, and in 1849 two of her poems including *The Drowned Mariner* appeared in Griswold's *Gift Leaves of American Poetry,* which contained the work of the best-known poets of that period.

In addition to her contributions to these gift-books, Mrs. Oakes Smith edited *The Mayflower,* a Boston publication, for the years 1847 and 1848. In her preface to the former volume, she stresses the need of American books if native literature is to develop, and, as might be expected, none of the articles are by foreign authors. Of the thirty selections in this book, eleven were written by Mrs. Oakes Smith and three by Seba Smith. The poets Hoffman and Mrs. Embury and the critics and essayists Richard Grant White and Tuckerman were other contributors. Four historical sketches by Mrs. Oakes Smith seem to be the only pieces written expressly for *The Mayflower.* The best work of her own, which, however, had appeared before, is the Indian legend, *Machineton,* showing how an evil god was created by accident.

In the volume of 1848, five of the selections were written by Mrs. Oakes Smith, none by her husband. Other contributors were Mrs. Osgood, Margaret Fuller, Miss Lynch, Hoffman, and two other New York friends who wrote poetry, Miss Bogart and Mrs. Embury. Mrs. Oakes Smith's articles

seem to be reprints except for a poem written to accompany an engraving and possibly a sentimental tale entitled *Sinned Against,* which covers some sixty pages, lacks probability, and is purely emotional in its appeal.

Barring poems and narratives based on Biblical material, the Smiths' contributions to annuals did not differ particularly from their magazine articles. The frequent appearance of their names in both types of publication indicated, however, that they had gained the recognition which they sought in coming to New York. Though misfortune had brought them there and it had cost years of struggle to win their reputation, it seems probable that necessity pushed both to greater literary endeavor than would have been exerted had they remained prosperous in the little city of Portland.

CHAPTER VI

SEBA SMITH AS AN EDITOR IN NEW YORK

Seba Smith's early editorial experience in Portland proved of value to him during the forties and fifties, when he was instrumental in launching several magazines in New York. They were not equally successful, but as the support of the family depended entirely on the combined literary efforts of his wife and himself, his work as an editor added something at least to their yearly income. After his arrival in New York he at once endeavored to secure employment as assistant upon some paper. He went first to Horace Greeley, then an enterprising young man under thirty, who was starting his career as one of the most influential of New York editors; but Greeley, with the callousness of youth, told him there was no place for old men on his staff. This rebuff was disheartening. Seba Smith was then not quite fifty, although he looked older than his years, and thoughts of his youthful wife and small children must have urged him to make the utmost use of his abilities. He had to content himself for a time, however, with writing for current magazines and newspapers, among which Greeley's earliest venture, *The New Yorker,* as has been noted, was one of the first to publish his work. Not until 1843 was he able to establish editorial connections, but from then until 1845 he was occupied in this capacity with various undertakings.

Among his enterprises were two weekly magazines and a daily newspaper.[1] It was during the administration of

[1] He edited also for a few months *Brother Jonathan* and a *Young People's Magazine,* of which no copy has been located.

Mayor Harper, from April 9, 1844, until 1845 that he assumed partial editorship of the *New York American Republican,* the organ of the city government under the régime of Harper, who came into office as a candidate of the Native American party. For this cause Smith had been active with his pen both in *Bunker Hill,* a weekly concerned mainly with politics and featuring again the Downing letters, and in *The Rover,* a weekly magazine with a distinct literary flavor, in which the letters from the *Bunker Hill* were reprinted.

In Richard Henry Stoddard's *Recollections* one may get a glimpse of Seba Smith at this period as he sat preoccupied in the editor's chair in his office at 162 Nassau Street. He was then editing *The Rover,* to which Stoddard had sent his first poem, *Non Omnis Moriar,* and after waiting two weeks had decided to go to the office to learn its fate. There he found Seba Smith, who showed him his poem already printed.

> He was then what I considered an elderly man [says Stoddard], — somewhat over fifty, I imagine, — and was tall or seemed so as he sat at the desk writing, had a pleasant face, a kind, bright eye, and a sweet, gentle voice. . . . The kindness with which Mr. Smith received me removed any apprehension I might have had respecting the treatment I was likely to receive from men of established reputation. . . . Mr. Seba Smith . . . was the first editor, the first poet, and the first man of letters whom I was fortunate enough to meet.[2]

The Rover was the most important of Seba Smith's undertakings, as his connection with that magazine continued from March 24, 1843, until January 11, 1845, during which time the public was offered a compilation of tales, sketches, and poems, not often original, but frequently showing excellent judgment on the part of the editors. Lawrence Labree, a magazine writer and editor, was in partnership with

[2] R. H. Stoddard, *Recollections,* N. Y., 1903, pp. 35–36.

Smith when *The Rover* was started. While it existed it was first twelve, then sixteen, pages in length and sold for $3.00 a year; in the end Smith retired and left the paper to Labree alone.

In the early numbers there were many anonymous sentimental tales catering to the popular taste of the day, and the engraving each week, with an accompanying sketch or story, added to the attractions of the magazine. In the fifteenth issue, readers were informed that "favor accorded the paper for three months had encouraged the publishers to associate additional aid in the editorial department and that there would now be more original material." Up to this time there had been six original articles: two poems and one tale by obscure writers, two anonymous sketches, and one by Labree. In the following eleven numbers of Volume I were sixteen original articles. Four were signed by Seba Smith; one was by Mrs. Seba Smith, as she is here designated; two by Thomas Buchanan Read; and six by obscure contributors. Read's characteristics as an artist and poet of the period are best exemplified by *Drifting,* of which the lines,

> My soul today is far away
> Sailing the Vesuvian bay

are familiar to most readers; but certainly no poem of his is as dear to the popular heart as *Sheridan's Ride,* written in 1865. His two poems in *The Rover* entitled *Blennerhasset, the Lord of the Isle* [3] and *Brackett's Bust of Bryant* [4] have historic and contemporary interest. A discussion of the subplot of *Twelfth Night* [5] to illustrate an engraving of Malvolio and the Countess, and one of the *'Way Down East* tales,

[3] Vol. I, No. 23, p. 366.
[4] Vol. I, No. 19, p. 304.
[5] Vol. I, No. 19, pp. 289–291.

Getting over the Difficulty,[6] are perhaps the most amusing of Seba Smith's original articles.

The most significant of his contributions, however, is his review of *Sam Slick in England*,[7] by Haliburton. This and *Change for American Notes* Seba Smith commends as answers to Dickens, asserting that the novelist's criticism of America after his entertainment here was a "social outrage." In referring to Sam Slick he writes: [8]

> We were pleased at the unconscious acknowledgment of the original *Jack Downing* source whence the first fruit of these admirable and deservedly popular writings was drawn, and pained that our own careless thunder was more completely lost to us than ever when fashioned into well formed bolts by a hand so capable to wield them. Yet such is often the fate of the literateur. His mind, like the stream which unconsciously runs over the golden mine, disengages at times the rich ore below, and bears it carelessly onward till it meets some more fortunate eye, some more favored hand — some really gifted mortal who has both the leisure to trace and the skill to work the wealth-bestowing vein which another has disclosed to him.

Toward the end of the first volume of *The Rover* a note from the *Portland Transcript* refers to Seba Smith and his wife as coming editors, with the observation that "with such able navigators *The Rover* must make pleasant voyages." Seba Smith replies that Mrs. Smith's place is not editor, "that she goes for the pleasure of the vige but she works her passage — as Paddy did in the canal boat, walking on the side track and leading the horse." [9] She contributed poems, essays, and tales throughout his editorship, although they were usually reprinted from other periodicals.

[6] Vol. I, No. 23, pp. 361–363.

[7] Vol. I, No. 22, pp. 348–350.

[8] Mr. Chittick shows, however, that although Haliburton disapproved of Dickens' book, this was in no sense a retort. *Thomas Chandler Haliburton*, 1924, p. 439.

[9] Vol. I, No. 18, p. 287.

Favorable notice of the first volume of *The Rover* was given in the *Tribune* for October 16, 1843. It is described as "chiefly made up of select tales, though these are very agreeably interspersed with poetry, sketches of scenery and incident, and editorial comments." "As a travelling companion," the reviewer adds, "to beguile the tedium of a long journey or enliven a few hours not otherwise employed, there are few volumes we would sooner select than this."

Seba Smith's name appeared as the sole editor of the second volume and several of his tales which had come out in other magazines were republished. From Irving, Paulding, Drake, Hoffman, Bryant, Whittier, and Longfellow selections continued to be reprinted. There were also a few original poems and tales for which the editor and his wife were responsible. *Henpeckery,*[10] by the former, is the story of a family brought to ruin by the mother's extravagance and vanity. *The Life-Preserving Coffin,* also from Seba Smith's pen, is an example of verse suggested by an engraving.[11] The invention and exhibition in New York of this coffin, so constructed as to release the occupant in case he was not really dead, is thought to have inspired certain passages in *The Premature Burial* by Poe.

In the eighteenth number of the second volume, January 19, 1844, is a whale story by J. N. Reynolds called *Mocha Dick of the Pacific,*[12] which is one source of Melville's *Moby Dick,* published in 1851. This tale pictures a "bull whale

[10] Vol. II, No. 7, pp. 97–101.

[11] Vol. II, No. 18, pp. 281–282.

[12] Pp. 276–280. Republished from *The Knickerbocker,* May, 1839. In a letter to the *London Times Literary Supplement* of July 30, 1925, Mr. R. S. Garnet proposes republishing this in full. He gives the original title of the tale written in 1841 as *Mocha Dick or the White Whale of the Pacific; a Leaf from a Journal.* The name, he says, was taken from the isle of Mocha off the coast of Chile, and Melville, not wishing to localize his whale, changed the name to *Moby.*

of prodigious size and strength, white as wool, flinging the water from its spout not obliquely forward, but in a lofty perpendicular, expanded volume at regular and somewhat distant intervals" — quite clearly the original of the great white whale of Melville's novel. The celebrity of the mammal after his first appearance stirs the ambition of many sailors to try an encounter, and after various unsuccessful attempts Mocha Dick is captured. A spirited account of the final struggle ends the story. In republishing such a vigorous narrative with its tang of the sea and graphic pictures of sailing vessels and their crews, the editor showed excellent judgment.

Major Jack Downing first appeared in *The Rover* toward the end of the second volume in a letter dated January 1, 1844,[13] and from then on an occasional word from him added spice to the current numbers. The first issue of the third volume had on the cover Jack Downing's picture, which the editor referred to in a letter of March 15, 1844, as a good likeness. Beginning with July 26, 1844,[14] the Downing letters were not written originally for *The Rover* but were reprinted from *Bunker Hill,* a new weekly magazine or newspaper, of which no copies have been available. It was edited by Seba Smith and noticed in *The Rover* of August 4. This transference of material continued as long as Smith was editor of *The Rover.* Native Americanism was cleverly interpreted in a letter from Uncle Joshua in the twenty-fifth number of Volume III. Having suffered from the pranks of strange boys who climbed into his apple tree and pelted him with the fruit, Uncle Joshua declared he wouldn't have any foreigners climbing into our tree of liberty. Aside from the Downing letters the only original contribution from Seba Smith to the third volume of *The Rover*

[13] Vol. II, No. 18, pp. 285–286.
[14] Vol. III, No. 20, pp. 319–320.

seems to be *Debby Wilder,* a tale of a Yankee girl admirable for her spirit and cool daring.

My Boys and Girls, for the issue of April 20, 1844,[15] arrests the eye because of its signature, Walter Whitman, as the poet was known before his reputation was made. This article, which has not been collected until recently, is of especial biographical interest. At the time Whitman was in his twenty-fifth year, the second in a family of eight; and of the twelve young people he pictures here with understanding and charm, three may be recognized by name as his brothers.

> What would you say, dear reader [he asks], were I to claim the nearest relationship to George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Andrew Jackson? Yet such is the case, as I aver upon my word. Several times has the immortal Washington sat on my shoulders, his legs dangling down upon my breast, while I trotted for sport down a lane or over the fields. Around the waist of the sagacious Jefferson have I circled one arm, while the fingers of the other have pointed him out words to spell. And though Jackson is (strange paradox) considerably older than the other two, many a race and tumble have I had with him — and at this moment I question whether, in a wrestle, he would not get the better of me, and put me flat.

In *Specimen Days*[16] Whitman speaks again of his brothers Andrew, George, and Thomas Jefferson, who, according to Dr. Bucke,[17] were respectively eight, ten, and fourteen years younger than the poet. Of the remaining nine boys and girls in the article in *The Rover* he calls little Louisa, an "angel child," his niece; and in sketching the others shows such affection as would indicate that they might also be near kin or close friends and comrades.

[15] Vol. III, No. 5, p. 75. Cf. *The Half-Breed and other Stories by Walt Whitman,* ed. by T. O. Mabbott, N. Y., 1927, pp. 18, 109.

[16] Walt Whitman, *Complete Prose Works,* Boston, 1898, p. 10.

[17] R. M. Bucke, *Walt Whitman,* Phila., 1883, p. 13. Cf. also H. B. Binns, *A Life of Walt Whitman,* London, 1905, p. 13.

Whitman feels deeply the beauty and purity of the young but fears the blight that age may bring; so he stresses the need of youth and cheer in the heart as the passing years bring their toll of bodily disabilities.

> May it not be well [he writes in closing], as we grow old, to make ourselves often fresh and childlike and merry with those who are so fresh and merry? We *must* grow old — for immutable time will have it so. Gray hairs will be sown in our heads, and wrinkles in our faces; but we can yet keep *the within* cheerful and youthful — and that is the great secret of warding off all that is unenviable in old age. The fountain flowing in its sweetness forever, and the bloom undying upon the heart, and the thoughts young, whatever the body may be — we can bid defiance to the assaults of time, and composedly wait the hour of our taking away.

Seba Smith's editorship of *The Rover* ended January 11, 1845, with the seventeenth number of the fourth volume. It began with a recapitulation of the aim to make "a good magazine of general popular literature which should have a permanent interest, be valuable for preservation, and worthy of being bound into volumes." This purpose is carried out with a compilation of material which differed little from that of previous years. In the issue of February 8, 1845, is some reprinted, anonymous criticism, in which Longfellow is attacked for accidental plagiarism of a ballad entitled *The Good George Campbell.* This charge is not thought to be the work of Poe, but is believed to be the source for portions of his later attacks on Longfellow.[18]

Volume V, beginning March 22, 1845, continued to be edited by Lawrence Labree, who had carried on the work after Seba Smith gave up editorship. The writers and material seem, generally speaking, to be of less significance than in earlier issues. Reprints by D. W. Jerrold and Miss Martineau are exceptions. No complete file of the fifth

[18] Statement of Dr. T. O. Mabbott. See *The Rover,* Vol. IV, No. 21, p. 336.

volume has been available. In the last issue of *The Rover* for September 13, 1845, the editor stated that it would be published the following week as *The New York Illustrated Magazine,* "the name *Rover* being injurious to its character as an elegant magazine of polite literature." The paper continued through three volumes after its change of name. While it existed as *The Rover,* it sold for the same price as *Brother Jonathan* and for a dollar less than the *New York Mirror* and *The Broadway Journal.* Although these papers all contained more original material than *The Rover,* which consisted mainly of varied selections that had found popular favor, the engravings of the latter added an attraction which the other weeklies did not offer. It was on the whole an interesting experiment which continued successfully for two years and a half — not a bad record in a period when numerous magazines were being started, often to be given up after a few months' circulation.

The *New York Citizen and American Republican* was established October 20, 1843, to secure the election of Mayor Harper. When he came into office Seba Smith was made an editor of the paper, and in the issue of April 17, 1844, the following announcement was published:

> While our columns shall ever be devoted to the principles of our party [Native Americanism], we also mean to establish a daily newspaper not behind any in the city — and we shall count on a subscription list equal to the number of votes given to James Harper, our Mayor elect.

Space which had been mainly devoted before the election to campaign propaganda was now given to discussion of city affairs, to legislative proceedings, to current news, and also to poems, jokes, and short stories. Such literary material may be found in most of the newspapers with which Seba Smith was connected. The humorous anecdotes frequently conspicuous on the first page of the *New York American Re-*

publican, under which title the paper appeared in enlarged form, April 24, 1844, also indicate his hand.

Among other names accompanying tales and poems are those of Paulding, Charles Fenno Hoffman, and George P. Morris. The story which is most suggestive of the editor's taste in humor is *The Tin Peddler and Sleepy David or A Yankee among the Nullifiers,* by a South Carolinian, in the issue for September 2, 1844. The title was evidently borrowed from Asa Greene's *Yankee Peddler among the Nullifiers* (1835), in which the dishonest dealings of a Yankee peddler figure largely in a narrative designed as a veiled satire of nullification principles. The theme of this anonymous tale, however, is quite unlike that of Greene's, and has no political significance. The Yankee peddler and his horse, Sleepy David, enter the races in a town of South Carolina after the rider, feigning poverty, has borrowed the entrance fee of two hundred dollars and staked one thousand that his animal would win. The bet was covered, but horse and rider were merely objects of ridicule during the first two heats. As the writer describes them,

> The horse went pawing along with his tail clinging close to his haunches, and his nose stuck straight out before him; and you never beheld so queer a figure cut by any man and horse as this singular pair made.

Toward the end of the last heat, however, Sleepy David pricked up his ears, overtook most of the racers, and finished several rods ahead of any other horse. All the spectators who had looked with derision upon the Yankee's assurance, were forced to acknowledge his canny judgment as he pocketed his two thousand dollars.

The *Republican* seems to be the only daily newspaper with which Seba Smith was concerned in New York, and his connections with this lasted no more than a year. After 1845

there is no indication that he attempted further editorial work until 1853. In June, 1846, as has been observed, he started his later series of Downing letters, which were published for ten years in the *National Intelligencer*, Washington; but these were not always produced with the same ease as the earlier letters. After an illness in the fall of 1855, he wrote a relative of answering a request for a Downing letter, remarking, "So sick as I was, I spent the best part of a week trying to administer a laughing dose to the nation."[19] Other writing, it will be remembered, took his time during these years, and particularly before 1850, when he published his *New Elements of Geometry*, he was deeply absorbed in mathematical problems. A letter of July 17, 1853, shows, however, that he had started out again on editorial ventures. This time it was a paper called *The Budget*, and although he writes of "having had little pay while the paper was getting under way, as the publisher's means were slight," he states "that the prospects of the paper then seemed good." A careful search has been made to find a copy of *The Budget*, but as no issue has been discovered, little can be said of the paper. It seems to have started with a fair number of subscribers at the modest price of fifty cents a year, and it is known that Mrs. Oakes Smith, who was making lecture tours through the West at this time, wrote frequent letters to be published in *The Budget;* these alone would be important as the record of a woman's pioneer work in the lecture field and of her experiences in the West.

From 1854 until 1859 Seba Smith had important connections with the *United States Magazine* and the *United States Journal* — the former, a monthly magazine starting at one dollar a year, the latter, a cheap bimonthly selling at twenty-five cents a year. His responsibility and managerial

[19] In a letter of Oct. 11, 1855, to a sister, Mrs. Anne P. Larrabee, Bath, Maine.

care were intermittent until 1858, when he and his family took entire charge of *Emerson's United States Magazine* and *Putnam's Monthly* combined in one magazine.

The first reference of Seba Smith's to his concern with either of these periodicals is in a letter to his sister, November 12, 1854, when he wrote, "I have to do all the editing and furnish all the matter for the *United States Magazine* and *United States Journal.*" "The purpose of the magazine," he writes in the first issue, starting in May, 1854, "is to contribute its mite toward the instruction, elevation, and general welfare of society, and its character is to be useful, practical, and instructive rather than light, imaginative, or sentimental." In the same number, Seba Smith reviewed his wife's novel *Bertha and Lily,* and Mrs. Oakes Smith showed discriminating judgment in her dramatic criticism. She considered Forrest, who was then playing Hamlet in the Broadway Theatre, hardly suited to interpret a character so delicately organized. The plays of Congreve and Farquhar running at Burton's Theatre she censured as severely as had Jeremy Collier in England some one hundred and fifty years earlier. Moral drama, which she indicated was "all the rage," doubtless under the influence of *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* she criticized for its lack of unity and maudlin sensibility as exemplified in *Hot Corn,* then on the stage.

The introduction of Democritus, the laughing philosopher, in the August number, is perhaps the most significant of Seba Smith's contributions. Democritus Junior, who takes his name from Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy,* is "a connecting link between the printer's devil and the editor," has a small stature like the ancient Greek philosopher whose name he bears, is a pattern of politeness, and wanders about with a restless and uneasy motion in search of nuts to crack for the humorous page. The nuts he offers differ very little

at first from the ordinary line of newspaper jokes. He later drops into the manner of Major Jack Downing, displaying thus the most characteristic humor of the editor. "I've only been shying round among the Know Nothings," he says, for instance, "there's the most fun among them folks of anybody now-a-days. Them Know Nothings is goin' to give us fun alive the next two years, I tell you."[20] Such a name was attached to the political party also known as the Native American, because its members were pledged, if questioned, to profess ignorance of all its methods and principles. Starting in 1843, it had early attempted to exclude foreigners from office in the large cities and had attacked the Roman Catholic Church as an alien institution. At the beginning more or less local in character, the Know Nothing party gradually widened its influence until in 1854, when it stood firmly for Union, it was laying plans to secure state and national victories.

The best satire by Democritus is that on Young America, represented by Solomon Swop, a namesake of a Yankee character acted by James Hackett in 1828,[21] and Jerry Starns, who go out to Japan with Commodore Perry. Solomon lands from this yawl at Japan and gives a piece of his mind to a little Jap, who calls the Americans "filibusters come to eat 'em up."

> Now look-a-here you, little insignificant rat, . . . I tell ye you don't know nothin', and we've come to larn you somethin', and you've got to take it, or we'll blow it into ye. We're agoin' to make human beings and Christians of ye; and we are coming here to

[20] Vol. I, p. 191. (Oct., 1854.) Smith was interested in the party's principle of Native Americanism, but in their methods saw an opportunity for ridicule.

[21] In *Jonathan in England.* Cf. A. H. Quinn, *A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War,* New York and London, 1923, p. 296.

trade, and swop, and buy and sell, jest as much as we are a mind to, and you've got to behave yourselves, every rat of you, or you'll all be blowed to thunder — do you hear.[22]

This bit of irony did more than scratch the surface of American politics.

From the winter of 1855 until the spring of 1856 the editorial care of the *United States Magazine* and the *United States Journal* was in other hands. During this time, however, the periodical was well seasoned by Seba Smith. Democritus is his most characteristic work. This laughing philosopher presents stories with political application such as *Billie Huggin's Wife,* an absurd picture of woman's rights, in the August number, and introduces in the September issue, with graphic illustrations, rhymes ridiculing an English dude, entitled *Lord Gammon's Ride in Broadway.* In these verses Lord Gammon finds nothing worthy of notice in New York but himself. Seba Smith appears to have had little responsibility for the magazine in the summer and fall of 1855, as he took time for an extended visit to Maine, satisfying a desire to see old friends and the scenes of his childhood, and wrote of a lingering illness after his return. In a letter of October 11 he seemed doubtful of writing much more except an occasional article and thought Democritus of the October number was "rather falling out." From then on the laughing philosopher depended more and more on pictures for humor.

Contrary to his expectations, in May, 1856, the editor was able to undertake entire control of the magazine again, and in July of that year it was enlarged to the size of the first class $3.00 monthlies; the summer of 1856 then found him fully occupied. His best bit of verse for this year, which deserves to be quoted in part, is *Live Yankee,* appearing in August, 1856.

[22] Vol. I, p. 288. (Jan., 1855.)

The Yankee *down* East is reflective and cool —
Plans with caution and acts by a definite rule.
The Yankee *out* West lays his plans as he goes,
Binds himself by no rule, and no precedent knows,
The Eastern man *thinks* while the Western man *acts;*
This investigates *principles* — that applies *facts.*
The Yankee down East makes his way through the street
With his head in a vertical line with his feet;
But the Yankee out West has such go-ahead power
That his head gets, in general, full three feet before —
One would think while observing his desperate pace
That the world had escaped him, and he was in chase.[23]

Political discussions continued under such titles as *Our National Destiny,*[24] which Seba Smith seemed to believe with many others was the control of the continent, and *Women and Politics.*[24] To women he conceded the right to vote, but doubted the expediency and practical import of such a change.

His sketch of *Quogue Pete* for November, 1857, with its setting in two rival seaboard towns of Long Island, is told with much quaintness and charm. The darky lighthouse keeper, who declared he had been the servant of General Washington, was asked to grace the Fourth of July celebration both in Larboardville and in Starboardborough as a Revolutionary hero. His weakness for spirituous liquors, however, led him into a trap set by the men of Larboardville. The trumped up tale of his military adventures was forgotten when demanded by the people of Starboardborough, and his exposure as a fake resulted in the loss of his position.

In October, 1857, the Downing letters, including most of the first series and those which had been coming out in the *National Intelligencer,* appeared in *Emerson's Magazine* under the title *My Thirty Years Out of the Senate,* parody-

[23] Vol. III, p. 189. [24] Dec., 1856.

ing Thomas H. Benton's book, and continued through June, 1858. Some material in the *National Intelligencer* was omitted, and the order and dates of several letters were changed. The woodcuts done especially for this last edition were an added attraction, and the series now appeared just as it was to be published in book form in 1859.

Since May, 1856, essays, poems, and tales from the pen of Mrs. Oakes Smith had been printed in profusion in her husband's magazine. In 1857 she contributed sketches of women in the French Revolution, *Madam Roland,* which she had written as a lecture in 1853, for January, and *Charlotte Corday,* a reprint, for February. A review of Mrs. Browning's *Aurora Leigh* appeared in the same number, and criticisms of several American books in various issues. Contemporary poetry and fiction she reviewed with a discrimination which brought appreciative words from literary friends. Sarah Helen Whitman was quite definitely in sympathy with her treatment of Poe in the March number. Mrs. Oakes Smith recognized, as did Mrs. Whitman, Poe's finest traits and deprecated his irregularities, which were so magnified by his severest critics. "We are shocked," she wrote in viewing him from this aspect, "as though we had seen a white-winged angel trailing his beautiful wings through the filth and mire of the highway." [25] She believed Poe to be "a wonderful genius — not the greatest or truest, but one who must not be forgotten." This article reappeared as part of more extended recollections given in *Beadle's Monthly,* February, 1867, and in *The Home Journal,* March 15, 1876.

In October, 1857, *Emerson's Magazine* and *Putnam's Monthly* were united under the management of Seba Smith. *Putnam's Monthly,* which since its establishment in January, 1853, under the editorship of C. F. Briggs, had ranked first among magazines using only American material, was

[25] Vol. IV, p. 262. (Mar., 1857.)

sold in 1857, first to Miller and Curtis, then to Dix and Edwards, who were unsuccessful with the periodical and sold it again to Mr. J. M. Emerson. To keep up to the standard of a magazine which had been handling copyright material from first-rate American authors, such as *The Moosehead Journal* by Lowell and the *Potiphar Papers* by George William Curtis, was too much of an undertaking for a small publishing house and an editor of Seba Smith's experience. The combining of the two magazines in one was not a successful experiment. It became a family affair; Appleton Oaksmith, Seba Smith's eldest son, now some thirty years of age, took over the publishing business, all four sons wrote for the magazine, and Mrs. Oakes Smith coöperated with her husband as one of the editors.

As a bit of family history, it is interesting to see the sons of this literary couple joining forces with them in their enterprise. Appleton, who was engaged from time to time in the shipping business, wrote poetry for the most part, and at least one poetic effort, *Maggie Bell,* received rather wide commendation. Edward, the young idealist, who became a Roman Catholic and had spent some time in Italy, contributed essays on art including *Murillo, Leonardo da Vinci,* and *Pre-Raphaelitism.* Sidney and Alvin wrote articles varying in subject from *Chess* to the *Puck-wad-jies* of Indian folk-lore.[26] Sidney had been in 1853 and 1854 United States consul at Hayti; Alvin had carried on a number of different pursuits, and for a period was in business at Buenos Aires.

As little material was coming in from contemporary writers of repute, the magazine could not take a place with the

[26] These were referred to by Mrs. Oakes Smith in her *Legends of Iagou,* comprising part of the chapter on Indian mythology in Schoolcraft's *History, Condition, and Prospects of the American Indians,* Rochester, 1851. See Pickard's *Life and Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier,* Boston, 1895, p. 481.

other important literary periodicals of the day. Most of the work from Seba Smith's pen during this year had been in print before. His comment on *The Biglow Papers,* which he compared unfavorably with the Downing letters as a representation of Yankee character, is valuable only as it shows what he tried to do in the latter epistles. The satiric genius of Lowell he failed to appreciate.[27] Mrs. Oakes Smith reprinted a number of tales and sketches this year, and wrote several critiques on the drama showing keen observation and good judgment. Doubtless with a full understanding of the popular appeal in any treatment of Washington as a folk hero, she started in July, 1858, as a serial, the life of the first President. *The Seven Travellers,* an account of a trip taken to Niagara with Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman and other literary folk, in the October and November numbers, is entertaining because of its informality. Mrs. Whitman's quotation on this journey from Herman Melville's *Pierre* attracts the attention as evidence of contemporary appreciation of that writer.

> From without [she repeats] no wonderful effect is wrought within ourselves, — unless some interior, corresponding wonder welcomes it.[28]

In October, 1858, Seba Smith stated that the combination of the two magazines had not been successful, and that when united they were relics of failures.[29] He did not give up beaten, however, but offered the prospectus for a new magazine to be called *The Great Republic* and to begin in January, 1859. In describing this, he wrote, "It is to have a nationality broad enough to cover the whole Republic, pa-

[27] Vol. VI, pp. 665–666. (June, 1858.)

[28] *Emerson's Mag.* and *Putnam's Monthly,* Vol. VII, p. 463. Slightly misquoted — "unless some interior, *responding* wonder *meets* it." *Pierre or The Ambiguities.* Constable & Co., London, 1923, p. 70.

[29] Publication stopped with November issue.

triotism deep enough not to be swerved from duty by party strifes and is to be tolerant, wide awake, discreet, conscientious, and pure."

The Great Republic seems to have endured only a year, although an announcement was made for the year 1860 with a list of distinguished writers engaged. Very few signatures were given to the articles during the year 1859. Both Seba Smith and Mrs. Oakes Smith appear to have done the editing and they can be pretty clearly detected in many of the tales and sketches. The *Omnibus* in the editorial department is a name used also in *The Rover.* Ike Ribbon, the Driver, however, is a new personage, and the telling of stories by the various passengers, which are appealing because of their human interest, is a new device.

The History of the Great Republic is given in serial form as is also *Life and Travel in the Southern States.* Some aspects of city life are sketched in articles on the street musicians, rag pickers, and sewing girls of New York. It is probable that these, particularly the last, were written by Mrs. Oakes Smith. In February, note is made of the initial success of *The Great Republic;* the first edition, issued December 7, was exhausted in ten days and a second edition came out December 20. *Carmen of New York,* an article with illustrations in the May number, 1859, reminds one of Major Jack Downing's previous sketch of transportation on May Day. Various poems of Mrs. Oakes Smith's were reprinted, and in the November issue an earlier sketch of Seba Smith's [30] was expanded into a dramatic piece in three acts called *The First Blood of the Revolution.* The setting is in Lexington and Boston, and some of the characterization, such as that of Grandfather Buker in his eighty-first year, is good. Little, however, can be said of this as dramatic composition; it is hardly more than conversation with all de-

[30] *The Rover,* Vol. III, No. 20, p. 305.

scription left out. What action there is has slight continuity. The author, too, is unsuccessful in delineating serious warfare, as his continuous waggery prevents it from seeming real.

The Great Republic was widely advertised, particularly through the South, and literary friends of the Smiths wrote them of their interest in this project. But while there was a certain vitality in the new monthly and a freshness in point of view, it evidently did not contain enough superior work to compete with other magazines of the day.

It was doubtless a disappointment to Seba Smith that his seventeen years of experience as a newspaper editor in Portland did not help him to more permanent editorial connections in New York. He was certainly better fitted for work on the staff of a daily paper, had he been able to secure it, than for the editing of the various magazines to which he gave his attention. *The Rover,* however, should be considered a successful venture in which the editor's aims, though modest, were so definitely carried out that it still shows a distinctive character among the magazines of the period.

CHAPTER VII

'WAY DOWN EAST AND OTHER BOOKS BY JACK DOWNING

In the Downing letters and in *The Sinless Child,* which brought to the authors their first and widest recognition from the public, the distinctive characteristics of Seba Smith and Elizabeth Oakes Smith as writers are clearly apparent. Such diverse gifts as are exhibited in the shrewd and kindly humor of the letters and in the delicacy and idealism of the poem point to independent paths of literary endeavor, not so clearly marked in the large amount of hack work done by each for magazines and annuals. In their published books, however, although certain kindred interests appear, as the use of Indian history by Seba Smith in *Powhatan* and by his wife in *The Western Captive* and other novels, their individuality is more evident.

The first volume by the former after his arrival in New York was the poem *Powhatan,* on which he had been at work for several years. This book, published by Harpers in 1841, showed no trace of his art as a humorist. His subject was far from an original one, as poetry based on Indian tradition had been frequent since Freneau's literary treatment of it in *The Indian Student* and *The Indian Burying Ground* in 1788. Following this poem was Mrs. Sarah W. Morton's attempt in 1790 to represent savage manners and customs in *Ouabi.* The wars of King Philip, Roger Williams' exile, and the Indian raid on Schenectady had been celebrated in *Yamoyden* (1820) by James W. Eastman and Robert C. Sands, in *Whatcheer* (1832) by Job Durfee, and *Ensemere* (1840) by P. Hamilton Myers. Indian settings and characters were also used to introduce religious propa-

ganda as in *Wumissoo* (1826), written by William Allen, President of Bowdoin College from 1820 to 1838, and served as a background for tales of the fiercest passions, such as *Mogg Megone* (1834) by Whittier.[1]

Because of this repeated use of Indian history and traditions in mediocre verse, it would seem that a poem with such a theme must show very distinct merits to be favorably received. Probably many have read Poe's criticism of Seba Smith's *Powhatan* who never looked at the poem, and such persons could hardly be tempted, except by curiosity, to further investigation.[2] But, as in the treatment of other minor writers, Poe was often more or less influenced by his personal feelings, so here he seems to have made up his mind that a Yankee from Down East such as Major Jack Downing could never write poetry. On the other hand, reviews of the poem in the January number of *The Southern Literary Messenger* for 1841 and in *The Knickerbocker* for April, 1841, undoubtedly gave it more than merited praise.

The preface, which stresses the need of simple and natural language in true poetry, shows the influence of Wordsworth — an influence not wholly salutary, if one may ascribe to it the number of lines in *Powhatan* which are prose and not verse. In this proem of forty lines, which Poe calls unintelligible, a very definite tribute is paid to the warrior race passing out of the land wrested from them by their conquerors. The last line, however, referring to the author's conception

Embodied forth on thy deathless page

shows a wrong sense of perspective if nothing more. Poe's criticism of the canto divisions into unequal parts is trifling,

[1] Cf. Elizabeth Nitchie, *Longer Narrative Poems of America, Sewanee Review,* Vol. 26, pp. 283–300. (July, 1918.)

[2] Criticism printed in *Graham's Magazine,* July, 1841.

as it might apply as well to Scott's metrical romances, which Smith, like the authors of Indian poems before him, followed in his metre and general scheme. There is good reason for Poe's objection to the writer's arrangement of his facts, for although Seba Smith has omitted well-known events in the life of Pocahontas or Metoka, seemingly to keep the main attention on Powhatan, he has not succeeded in producing that effect.

Powhatan must certainly suffer in comparison with Scott's spirited romances, as would any of the earlier American poems based on Indian tradition. Seba Smith's ear was not sufficiently sensitive to enable him to write, with metrical facility, an extended poem. There are passages, however, that are well sustained, and there is a beauty in the person of Metoka and an unyielding nobility in the figure of her father which one would gladly remember. Powhatan's words to his daughter, who recalled to him her dead mother, show poetic feeling and suggestiveness of language:

> For her own bright locks of flowing jet
> Are over thy shoulders hung;
> In thy face her loving eyes are set,
> And her music is on thy tongue.[3]

The description of the dreaded god Okee is as good:

> Great Okee, dress'd in painted robes,
> And shining chains and beads,
> Who in the silent night performs
> Unutterable deeds.[4]

The story begins in May and covers a little over a year in time. The action is concerned chiefly with hostilities between the settlers at Jamestown and the native Indians. Though frequent offers of peace are made by the English,

[3] Seba Smith, *Powhatan,* N. Y., 1841, p. 22. [4] *Ibid.,* p. 63.

the Indians are suspicious and sometimes treacherous. Metoka's love for John Smith complicates the situation, but does not end in marriage with John Rolfe, as in the history. She is offered by her father to a young warrior if he secures the scalp of Sir John, as Captain Smith is consistently called in the poem. Metoka shrinks from the cruel heart of Nemattanow, the suitor honored by her father, and is saved from accepting him by the escape of John Smith, whose death she averts in the manner recorded in popular history. After an account of Smith's return to England and frequent ravages upon the colonists by the Indians, the poem ends with a fearful massacre and retaliation by the white settlers, who have taken Metoka captive. The conflict over, Powhatan alone remains of his kin and tribe, a solitary pilgrim wandering westward.

There is material here for a real poem, but Seba Smith has attempted too much. His sympathetic treatment of both father and daughter, whose interests are diametrically opposed, fails to give unity of impression, while the slighting of Metoka's final fate makes the poem seem unfinished.

In the same year that *Powhatan* was published, *Pocahontas* by Mrs. Sigourney appeared and was followed by numerous poems on the American Indian during the forties. Miss Nitchie states that the Indian braves, Tecumseh, Powhatan, and Black Hawk have received more attention as folk heroes than either Washington or Grant.[5] Tecumseh's name is seen most frequently in prose and verse of the period; and the one outstanding poem about him, a romance setting forth the hero in a picturesque Western background, was written by Smith's friend Colton in 1842. Later, in 1849, Elbert H. Smith put into verse the story of Black Hawk, a chieftain of the Sacs and Foxes in the Middle West, who took up arms against the United States because

[5] *Sewanee Review,* Vol. 26, p. 295. (July, 1918.)

of injustice to that race. Whittier's *Bridal of Pennacook* (1844), a tragic tale of an Indian wife, based on an early legend, was an improvement on *Mogg Megone;* and much poetic feeling and skill in expression is shown in Street's *Frontenac* (1849), a tale of an expedition against the Iroquois by Count Frontenac, Governor-general of Canada. The first long Indian poem, however, to merit distinction certainly was Longfellow's *Hiawatha,* published in 1855.

In 1845 Seba Smith's *May-Day in New York,* which was mentioned in the second chapter, was published both in New York and in Philadelphia. The horrors of moving on the first of May have been touched incidentally by many writers of the period,[6] but no one has given as much attention to the subject in fiction as Jack Downing in these three letters, of some ten pages each in length, to Aunt Keziah of Downingville. House hunting is the subject of the first letter. The custom of moving yearly was so general that Jack writes he came home to his wife Polly one day the first of March after seeing bills on nearly half the houses he passed, and "told her all New York was to let and he guessed they should find a home next year cheap enough." But he did a good deal of tramping and dickering before he finally engaged four rooms for $75 a year in Greenwich Street, a part of Greenwich Village, where the Smiths actually engaged their first rented rooms in New York, and where it would doubtless be impossible to get such accommodations now for $100 a month.

Seba Smith's fondness for Dickens is reflected in the caricature and general tone of these letters. There is, for instance, the fat Miss Pinkham, introduced in the first as a home seeker and a very disturbing element later in the Downing's domestic circle — a woman at the same time ab-

[6] Cf. David Crockett, *An Account of Col. Crockett's Tour to the North and down East,* Phila., 1837, p. 47.

surd and outrageously impudent. Squire Sharp, the landlord, who believes in coming down hard on his tenants, but who has driven a poorer bargain than he realizes with Miss Pinkham, seems also to be a familiar figure.

The second and third letters describe moving day in New York with its "amazin' sights and smells," a sad contrast to the first of May in the country at Downingville; and the Downing family are poorly prepared for their necessary labors by the uproar of the preceding night when, to save paying rent, it later appears, Miss Pinkham and her three charges camp down upon them with their household goods.

The Major does no end of bargaining on May Day, and at length engages an "old man with a lean old horse" to take his goods to Greenwich Street; but so many dishes are broken on the way that he would have profited by paying a higher price for transportation. Although the Major says, "We put Jacky right up top and let him set straddle of the load to steady it," the boy is no proof against a collision with an omnibus, "which knocked everything into a kind of a cocked hat." But thankful "that Jacky was saved alive," they persevere with their moving until at sunset they and all their worldly goods are stowed away in their new home.

The letters have interest not only as documentary evidence of the housing situation in New York at the period, but as an example of Seba Smith's ability to invest with humor what to many would appear only a trying experience. Major Jack Downing as a family man living in New York is also an appealing novelty. The three stories [7] combined with the letters in this book were collected in the later volume of tales called *'Way Down East.*

Not all the humorist's attention, we have seen, was given

[7] *Perseverance, Polly Gray and the Doctors,* and *Christopher Crotchet.*

to fun-making. Since his college days he had found an absorbing interest in the consideration of mathematical problems; and now in his work of book-building during the forties, he veered sharply from Yankee satire to a treatise entitled *New Elements of Geometry*. This was published in 1850 both in New York [8] and London,[9] and was judged by the author his most important work; but his anticipations of its success were to be disappointed.

In the preface Seba Smith speaks of his examination of the papers of John A. Parker on the quadrature of the circle, which suggested the idea that a mathematical line had breadth. This point he has undertaken to prove in his book, having worked with Greek rule and compasses in hand on all imaginable varieties of geometrical figures.

The book is divided into three parts. In the first, on the philosophy of geometry, the author asserts that lines, surfaces, and solids have the same nature and the same unit, the cube. He says further that geometry should not be taught by the methods of algebra, but should precede the study of arithmetic and thus simplify the problems of square root and cube root. The second and third parts consist of original demonstrations in geometry.

This book led to a correspondence between Seba Smith and Auguste Comte. In a letter written to Comte May 20, 1851, Smith spoke in praise of Comte's book, *The Philosophy of Mathematics,* referred to sending him his *New Elements of Geometry* discussing the cube as a unit of measurement in geometry, and to the possibility of solving equations beyond the fourth degree. Comte in his reply of August 1, 1851, showed interest and wrote that he planned to read *New Elements,* adding that geometrical instruction had need of total regeneration.

Smith waited until January 23, 1852, then wrote Comte

[8] By G. P. Putnam.

[9] By Richard Bentley.

again, asking his opinion of *New Elements* and summarizing his own views. Comte replied on March 2, 1852, and appeared to be touched by Smith's statement that it should always be the privilege of the "votaries of science to pursue the even tenor of their way even in the midst of political commotions and revolutions." He protested that there was no social indifference on his part, but that on the contrary, he had devoted his life to the regeneration of society. Smith's mathematical work he blamed severely, desiring him not to give another edition as it would increase the inconveniences of teaching geometry. He referred to Smith's acknowledged ignorance of algebra, which he declared a subject indispensable as preparation for an instructor in geometry.

On June 30, 1852, Smith replied, saying Comte misinterpreted his remark on votaries of science and affirming that the facts and demonstrations of *New Elements* could not be refuted. The strictures on his ignorance of algebra he declared unjust, as Euclid, Pythagoras, and Archimedes were more ignorant of algebra than himself, and he asserted that the concrete portion of mathematics should be a foundation for the abstract portion. The letter ends with another summary of his conclusions.

The correspondence did not continue, but an editorial in the *National Intelligencer,* in which all the letters appeared,[10] commended Seba Smith for the "lucid presentation of his views" and maintained that Comte had evidently not read the book with thoroughness. However, nothing occurred in Seba Smith's life or has occurred since to justify the confidence he felt in the results of his researches. Professor David Eugene Smith of the Mathematics Department at Teachers College, Columbia University, criticizes the book as unscientific and says that no

[10] May 5, 1854.

mathematician would agree to the defining of lines and surfaces as having thickness, for the reason that the definition would lead to all sorts of absurdities.

What Mr. Smith did [Professor Smith writes], was to develop a very crude type of Cavalieri's Geometry of the Seventeenth century. Whereas, however, Cavalieri knew what he was talking about, and laid a foundation upon which Newton and Leibniz could build, Mr. Smith had no definite idea of what he was trying to set forth. The crude work which he gives in geometry shows some native ingenuity, but it doesn't contribute anything at all significant. He was one of the type of men whom De Morgan has so delightfully satirized in his work entitled *A Budget of Paradoxes*. If De Morgan had known of this book he would surely have included it in his well-known work.

During the late thirties and forties Seba Smith had been writing Yankee stories which were published in current magazines; these he collected in 1854 in the volume, previously mentioned, *'Way Down East*. The tales are for the most part realistic pictures of New England life, the emphasis in some cases being put upon social customs, in others on humorous Yankee traits. Not a little attention is paid to early local history. Only one tale, *The Money Diggers*, with its supernatural figures and events, enters into the world of unreality.

Most of them represent phases of life not emphasized in other New England tales and are distinguished by their kindly good nature and homely humor. The author does not, like Miss Sedgwick, make his purpose specifically moral; nor does he, like Mrs. Stowe, turn as often to a theme of love or step aside to preach. But while, unlike the latter writer, he is untouched by the sentimentality of the period, making his characters a closer transcript from life, his style shows a less practised hand. In his stories of early New England history, there is no probing beneath the surface for a deeper meaning, after the manner of Haw-

thorne; Seba Smith attempts simply to recreate scenes from the past with emphasis on humorous aspects. He departs from other short story writers of New England in stressing not so much domestic scenes as the life that belongs to the community: social gatherings, the gossip of the village tavern, and the breath of the woods and fields.

Of these sixteen tales, there are several which are only slightly connected with Yankee life and character. Billy Snub, the newsboy, was born and brought up in New England, but the main part of his history is concerned with his life in New York. *The Dutch Wedding* is a story set in Albany, New York, told by John Van Ben Schoten to his Yankee friend. Their conversation at the beginning, in which Dutch and Yankee characteristics are strongly contrasted, serves as a framework for the story and as a possible excuse for including it in this collection. To John Van Ben Schoten are ascribed the qualities of perseverance, loyalty, and deliberation; to his Yankee companion enterprise, invention, and impatient action. *Old Myers* is little more than a sketch of a pioneer of the Daniel Boone type, who like Leatherstocking could not stand civilization and pushed continually westward. A similar character appears in John Esten Cook's first novel, *Leatherstocking and Silk*, published in 1852, and curiously goes by the name Hunter John Myers. The story was suggested by a real John Myers who, as Professor Beaty says, "saw the pines cut down to make the main street of Martinsburg and polite society, with its appurtenances and conventions, press forward upon the receding frontier."[11] No source of Seba Smith's tale is indicated; he may, however, have heard of the Virginian hunter used later in Cook's novel. *Seth Woodsum's Wife*, though set on a farm in New England,

[11] J. O. Beaty, *John Esten Cooke*, Columbia University Press, N. Y., 1922, p. 36.

appeals more through its psychological than its local interest. The story ends very humorously when the leading character, who alarms her husband on regular occasions by the conviction that she is dying, suddenly recovers from such spells at the moment that Seth Woodsum names to her the woman he has chosen to be his second wife.

Many of the stories are based on old records or traditions passed down from early times. The accounts of John Wadleigh's trial for sleeping in church and of Jerry Guttridge's public whipping for being an idle fellow and not providing for his family are examples. *Seating the Parish,* in which the irreverence of church attendants leads to reseating them according to the amounts of their subscriptions, is another illustration; although the setting for this tale is Long Island, the original settlers were New Englanders. So in *The Pumpkin Freshet,* the characters represented are immigrants from Connecticut who have settled in the Susquehanna Valley in New York. At the time of the freshet the river, swollen after the fall rains, carried off chickens and garden produce; but pumpkins, which were raised in great abundance as a substitute for root crops to feed the stock, came floating down by the acre and were left along the shore. The hardships of those pioneers are brought home when we read of Uncle Major Buck's walking forty miles to have a bushel of wheat ground and to buy a quarter of a pound of tea.

Rural life in Seba Smith's own time is vividly pictured in *A Yankee Christmas, Christopher Crotchet,* and *The Speculator.* In the first sketch the author's kindly spirit in depicting the homely fun of young and old on Christmas night at the roomy farmhouse of Solomon Briggs, the host of the occasion, reminds one of Goldsmith and his account of a similar frolic in *The Vicar of Wakefield.* None of the essentials of a country party Down East are omitted; there

are the long tables filled with tempting viands, and the boisterous games regarded by many New Englanders as much more innocent than dancing. There follow in quick succession post office, forfeits, and blind man's buff, and in the last, Mrs. Briggs, having removed her shoes, is as spry as any of the younger generation. The contrast between the very forward Harriet and the modest Susan and the constraint of the young people before the schoolmaster, who soon puts them at ease by his zest in entering into the games, are good touches.

Christopher Crotchet is in much the same vein. Here we are introduced to a country singing school and its teacher, whose personal defects even to his cross eyes are all smiled upon by Squire Brown's wife, for she is anxious to marry off her daughter Jerushy. But it is of no use for Jerushy to set her cap or continue her attempts to interfere with his attentions elsewhere; her perseverance in this direction is in fact too nearly detected at the end of the story when she slips and breaks the window through which she has been eying the amorous Christopher and the maiden of his choice. There is a close parallel to this situation in Eggleston's *Hoosier Schoolmaster*. Like the ogling Jerushy, Mirandy Means, the daughter of the richest man in Flat Creek District, tries with her simpering and vulgar ways to thwart the course of true love.

The Speculator has more of a story interest than some of the other sketches; the character of the swindler, however, who escapes the hands of the law at the end, is not particularly inviting. The description of the small Maine village situated within ten or fifteen miles of Moosehead Lake is typical. There are all the familiar features from the village inn, the two or three stores, schoolhouse, and trim, white church with its tapering steeple to the old mill on the shore of a neighboring pond.

The Money Diggers and Old Nick, a tale of hidden treasure, is quite distinct from the other stories. The three adventurers, Bill, the sailor, Farmer Jonathan, and his man Asa start gaily on their quest, using the familiar aid, the divining rod,[12] to locate the spot designated; but their encounter with Old Mother Newbegin and her allusions to Old Nick dampen their spirits. The last stage of the story when the money diggers work in silence at midnight, furious gusts of wind nearly taking their breath away, while a black dog barks and snaps at them from the edge of the hole with each shovelful of earth thrown out, shows real creative ability. Just as the treasure is almost within their grasp, they forget they must not speak, and make reply to a stranger who offers help. The spell then is broken, and realizing an evil presence, they fly for safety. The use of this supernatural being designated as Old Nick may have been suggested by Old Scratch in Irving's tale, *The Devil and Tom Walker.* Seba Smith, however, uses Old Nick merely as a figurehead or means of getting his characters off the stage, while Irving centres his story about the devil and his transactions with Tom. With this and Irving's other tales grouped under the title *The Money Diggers* Smith must have been familiar. The influence of Scott's *Antiquary* seems also possible, for Mr. Dousterswivel, who insists there is treasure buried in St. Ruth's priory, uses a divining rod to locate the spot and affirms that at midnight under a full moon he beheld spirits who would baffle his purpose.

As a whole the tale is long drawn out and uneven in its execution, but there is imaginative material here which

[12] Belief in the divining rod is an old superstition. The ends of a green crotched branch of witch-hazel are taken in each hand, the other end where the branches meet pointing toward the sky, and when near the place to be determined, the rod is supposed to bend and point toward the ground.

might be very effectively used in the hands of an artist like Poe. It is believed by Professor Killis Campbell[13] that the dog in his story *The Gold-Bug* was suggested by *The Money Diggers,* although Poe's dog was not hostile to the treasure diggers and had no supernatural qualities. Other parallelisms in connection with the setting and the kind of treasure found are cited by Professor Campbell to indicate that Poe may have been further indebted to Seba Smith.

Some of these sketches bring out distinctive Yankee traits. Curiosity, for instance, in *A Race for a Sweetheart* is vividly pictured when a stranger's arrival in town sets the villagers all agog. Sally drops her milk bucket and gazes long, Patty Bean stops at the door with a hot iron in her hand, and Mrs. Bean stands with her head out of the window and her hand over her eyes. The best tale of this character, however, is *The Tough Yarn,* in which the garrulous James Robinson illustrates the tradition that it is difficult to get a direct answer from a Yankee. The framework of the story here is the important part so far as the main point is concerned. Major Grant, finding it necessary to spend the night at an inn in a small town of Maine, starts a conversation with Dr. Snow, the country doctor, who, upon observing James Robinson limping toward the tavern, points him out to the Major and ventures a wager that it would be impossible to get from Robinson a direct answer to a simple question within a half hour. Major Grant takes his bet and James Robinson enters the inn, and is described as looking about with a knowing air that seemed to say, "Now gentlemen, if you want to know the time of day, here's the boy that can tell ye." Then follows a steady stream of talk, during which Major Grant realizes the

[13] Cf. Killis Campbell, *Miscellaneous Notes on Poe, Modern Language Notes,* Vol. XXVIII, pp. 65–66. (Mar. 1913.)

necessity of choosing a question skilfully. Finally, with his watch in his hand he asks James Robinson whether his lameness is in his foot or in his leg, thinking this should receive a short answer. This reminds their entertainer of his father's advice "never to tell where anything is unless you can first tell how it came there," which is duly illustrated by a long tale of theft in which Robinson was involved, though innocent. The question reiterated leads him on to other experiences, and he tells of being nearly killed going under a water wheel, and again of barely escaping having his feet gnawed off by a bear. Needless to say, the doctor wins the bet. Probably of all the characters represented in this volume, James Robinson is the most humorous.

'Way Down East went through six editions, the last in 1884. Next to the Downing letters this seems the most valuable of Seba Smith's writings. The representation of Yankee traits in these tales, quite apart from political considerations, did, in fact, entertain the popular reader longer than the epistles of Jack Downing. Contemporary reviews of the book, when first published in 1854, varied in their estimates of the work. *Putnam's Monthly* referred to the volume as "on the whole entertaining" with "several funny and spirited tales," though some had "the peculiarity of tapering off in a disappointing manner."[14] The criticism in *Harper's* ended with this appreciation:

> The lover of the quaint old times of half a century back will welcome these sketches as a faithful record of "what will ne'er be seen again."[15]

Like many of Seba Smith's stories, these show a weakness in construction, but most careful students of our literature

[14] *Putnam's Monthly,* Vol. V, p. 218. (Feb., 1855.)
[15] *Harper's Magazine,* Vol. X, p. 283. (Jan., 1855.)

would hope that they might not be forgotten, inasmuch as the pictures of New England here given are not duplicated in any other collection of sketches and are a distinct contribution to what is already known of Yankee life and character.

CHAPTER VIII

ELIZABETH OAKES SMITH'S VENTURES IN BOOKS

Elizabeth Oakes Smith's first published collection of poetry, in 1843, was accompanied by a prefatory note from the pen of Henry T. Tuckerman, whose defence of Shelley in *The Southern Literary Messenger* she had challenged two years earlier. "The spur of necessity," he wrote, "has left marks of haste on her productions but this spur is needed to make her known to fame."

> Yet such has been her willingness and her energy [John Neal adds to the introduction of this same volume]; such her steadfast determination to do all that might become a woman, for the help of her husband, who has had everything to struggle with since he removed to New York, and for the support of her little family, that she is now a regular, and we hope well-paid contributor to some of our cleverest and most popular journals, and has won for herself a most desirable reputation. She was a child but the other day; with no sense of her own strength; and after she became a woman, her countenance you could not see for her veil. . . . But the rain beat upon her husband, upon her little ones, and the winds blew, and the floods came, and lo! the veil disappeared like the mists of summer and the highest nature of woman broke forth like sunshine.

This combination of figurative and plain speaking was characteristic of Mrs. Oakes Smith's old Portland friend, John Neal, who had for her throughout his life a sincere admiration. His tribute here given was included in a sketch of the Smiths which had been printed in *The Family Companion* before it was used as an introduction to *The Sinless Child and Other Poems* in 1843.

John Keese, the editor of the volume, was a bookseller as well as a literary critic. In his preface he writes that

because of the many calls for *The Sinless Child* at his book store he had recommended its publication with other of Mrs. Smith's poetry. Poe praised this work in *Godey's Lady's Book* of December, 1845, for its "novelty of conception" and "grace and purity of style" and considered it one of the most original long American poems. Before 1840 the majority of long narrative poems in America showed a very definite Continental influence. Those based on Indian tradition, as has been noted, closely paralleled the manner of Scott, who was cleverly parodied by Paulding in his *Lay of the Scottish Fiddler*, published in 1814. The melodramatic romance in Mrs. Estelle Ann Lewis' long poems, such as *Senel*, *Florence*, and *Child of the Sea*, was only one instance of the tendency of minor American poets to tread in the steps of Byron. Better known as his imitators in shorter sentimental flights were James G. Percival and Edward Coate Pinkney. *Zophiel or The Bride of Seven* (1833) by Mrs. Maria G. Brooks, called by Southey "Maria del Occidente and the most impassioned and imaginative of all poetesses," is suggestive of him and of Moore in its poetic form and lyric beauty. Although the poem presents a miscellany of material through which one might wander as in a maze, the main theme of the story is powerful in its appeal. A combination of idealism and earthly passion is found here in the romance of Egla, whose many lovers are thwarted in their purposes by the angel Zophiel until Helon, superior even to the heaven-born in the strength of his spirit, wins her heart. In *The Sinless Child*, the idea of human love is subordinated to that of the growth of the spirit. This conception of the divinity innate in man Poe says he also has embodied in *Eureka*. In fact, he said once to Mrs. Oakes Smith, "In *Eureka* I am in the spirit what you are in *The Sinless Child*." [1]

[1] *Selections from Elizabeth Oakes Smith's Autobiography*, p. 124.

Such an admission necessitates a comparison of two works very different in character: one, a purely metaphysical speculation in prose; the other, a poem presenting a concrete picture of a child growing to womanhood and developing through harmony with nature a spirituality, which, as it approaches divinity, frees itself from earthly bonds. Dr. Mabbott, who has given much time and thought to the study of Poe, thus explains the similarity of ideas in these two productions:

> Poe probably found the kinship between *Eureka* and *The Sinless Child* (I judge after comparing the two works in the light of Poe's criticism of the latter) in their common use of the transcendental doctrine of the oneness of the individual soul with part of God, and of the direct " intuitive " communication of truth from the omnipresent Deity, both of which are cardinal doctrines in *Eureka*, and seem to be prominent particularly in the passages of *The Sinless Child* cited in Poe's longer printed criticism of it (*Godey's*, Dec., 1845). Mrs. Smith, sometimes echoing Wordsworth's *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality* verbally; and Poe, under the spell of Humboldt's *Kosmos* emphasize different aspects of these doctrines, but at bottom were in agreement, and Poe seems to have believed them to be the basic ideas of Mrs. Smith's poem, as he certainly regarded them in his own.

One or two parallel passages will serve to show the similarity of ideas. Poe raises the question,

> And now — this heart Divine — what is it?

and answers,

> *It is our own.*[2]

The sinless child intimates the same oneness of spirit, which, when clouded, results in dullness of perceptions, and replies to her mother's melancholy views of life:

[2] Poe's *Works*, ed. by Stedman and Woodberry, Chicago, 1894–96, Vol. IX, p. 134.

Nay, mother, everywhere is hid
  A beauty and delight,
The shadow lies upon the heart,
  The gloom upon the sight;
Send but the spirit on its way
  Communion high to hold,
And bursting from the earth and sky,
  A glory we behold! [3]

Poe says

. . . that God — the material and spiritual God — now exists solely in the diffused Matter and Spirit of the Universe; and that the regathering of this diffused Matter and Spirit will be but the re-construction of the *purely Spiritual* and Individual God.[4]

Mrs. Oakes Smith's lines,

And Love, unto the Infinite,
  Like Eva's is allied,
We say of such, " 'tis gone before,"
  But not that it hath died [5]

show similar views. Poe is, however, not concerned with the life of the spirit or the effects of sin; God is to him a first cause or principle embracing all forms of matter and spirit.

The Sinless Child comprises approximately two hundred stanzas of eight lines each, and when one considers the length of its verses, it is somewhat shorter than *Evangeline* (1847) with nearly fifteen hundred hexameters. It is divided into seven unequal parts, a prose synopsis introducing each division. In the attachment of Albert Linne, a gay and thoughtless youth, for Eva, there is a slight theme of

[3] *Poetical Writings of Elizabeth Oakes Smith,* N. Y., 1845, pp. 40–41.

[4] Poe's *Works,* ed. by Stedman and Woodberry, Chicago, 1894–96, Vol. IX, p. 136.

[5] *Poetical Writings of Elizabeth Oakes Smith,* 1845, p. 84.

love; but this affection never comes to fruition by earthly ties. Instead of a usual romantic ending, there is stress at the close on the beauty of Eva in death and on the lingering effect of her spirit upon Albert. The slight narrative thread of the poem is interrupted by ballads recited to Eva by her widowed mother; these show the poet at her best, but have little connection with the main theme. Although there are many passages which show beauty of thought and diction, the work as a whole is rather uneven in execution, and true feeling and clear thinking are sometimes effaced by sentiment and fancy as in the lines picturing insects:

> With wing of gauze and mailèd coat
> They gathered round her feet,
> Rejoiced, as are all gladsome things,
> A truthful soul to greet,[6]

or in others describing the elves as

> Tossing the drops of fragrant dew
> To scent the evening sky.[7]

On the other hand, there are many verses which one would remember for the imaginative feeling or truth expressed, for instance the foreboding of Eva's mother:

> I hear the old trees creak and sway,
> And shiver in the blast;
> I hear the wailing of the wind,
> As if the dead swept past; [8]

or the child's own experience when

> She . . . learned that love for evermore
> The heart will joyful keep; [9]

and this passage, which has been often quoted:

[6] *Poetical Writings of Elizabeth Oakes Smith,* 1845, Part I, stanza 6, p. 19.

[7] *Ibid.,* Part II, stanza 29, p. 32.

[8] *Ibid.,* Part III, stanza 19, p. 40.

[9] *Ibid.,* Part I, stanza 9, p. 20.

Bright missals from angelic throngs
  In every by-way left,
How were the earth of glory shorn,
  Were it of flowers bereft! [10]

Of the entire poem Poe writes:

In looking back at its general plan we cannot fail to see traces of high poetic capacity. The first point to be commended is the reach or aim of the poetess. She is evidently discontented with the bald routine of common-place themes, and originality has been with her a principal object. . . .

The execution of *The Sinless Child* is, as we have already said, inferior to its conception — as it floated, rather than steadily existed, in the brain of the authoress. She enables us to see that she has very *narrowly missed* one of those happy "creations" which now and then immortalize the poet. With a good deal more of deliberate thought before putting pen to paper, with a good deal more of the constructive ability, and with more rigorous discipline in the minor merits of style, and of what is termed in the school-prospectuses, composition, Mrs. Smith would have made of *The Sinless Child* one of the best, if not the very best of American poems.[11]

In the light of the spirit of the age, one can surmise why the poem was popular in its time. With its idealism, mysticism, and sentimental treatment of death — a favorite subject certainly with Poe and the German romanticists, it evidently made a wide appeal. However, that *The Sinless Child* today is practically forgotten is due not so much to a change in thought and taste as to the fact that it comes short of the requirements of a great poem, namely, sustained power and beauty.

Mrs. Oakes Smith's volume of 1843 contained in addition to *The Sinless Child* eleven sonnets and *The Acorn*, called by Griswold her most popular poem. This is in no way

[10] *Ibid.*, Part I, stanza 12, p. 21.

[11] *Godey's Lady's Book*, Vol. XXXI, p. 263. (Dec., 1845.)

distinctive; yet the interest is well maintained through a long narrative of thirty-three stanzas. All that helps or threatens the life of the acorn as it goes through its various stages of development from a tiny seed to a stately vessel is pictured in sprightly verse.

The demand for Mrs. Oakes Smith's volume of 1843 was great enough to warrant the publication in 1845 of a more complete collection of her poems edited by Griswold in a tiny volume which went through two editions. Thirty miscellaneous poems and nineteen sonnets were added to the number in her first book. One series entitled *The Poet's Life in Six Sonnets,* also in the 1843 edition, discloses her eagerness to achieve her ideals in the realm of poesy, to which the first of the group is addressed, and her failure to realize her most cherished aims. The thought of defeat is dominant in *The Bard, The Unattained,* and in *A Dream.* In the last she writes:

> How sorrow we o'er perished dreams of youth,
> High hopes and aspiration doomed to be
> Crushed and o'ermastered by earth's destiny! [12]

Many of the miscellaneous poems are written in a buoyant, tripping measure. The joyous spirit of a child lives in *The April Rain,* but *The Water,* already noted, is a more vivid picture of the drops falling.

> How beautiful the water is!
> Didst ever think of it,
> When down it tumbles from the skies,
> As in a merry fit?
> It jostles, ringing as it falls,
> On all that's in the way —
> I hear it dancing on the roof,
> Like some wild thing at play. [13]

[12] *Poetical Writings of Elizabeth Oakes Smith,* 1845, p. 99.
[13] *Ibid.,* p, 136.

In a few lines of Longfellow's *Rain in Summer,* published in 1845, there is a slight similarity which may indicate some suggestion from *The Water.*

> How it clatters along the roof
> Like the tramp of hoofs!
> How it gushes and struggles out
> From the throat of the overflowing spout.

His poem is much longer and has more dignity than Mrs. Oakes Smith's, but lacks her light, delicate touch.

The finest of her last poems in this collection is *The Drowned Mariner,* which with the exception of *The Sinless Child* is undoubtedly her best work in verse. In execution it surpasses the latter, though less elevated in conception. In comparison with the placid, conventional lyric tone of other women poets of the day, the spirited lines of the first stanza show a vigor and charm quite distinctive:

> A mariner sat on the shrouds one night,
> The wind was piping free,
> Now bright, now dimmed was the moonlight pale,
> And the phosphor gleamed in the wake of the whale,
> As he floundered in the sea;
> The scud was flying athwart the sky,
> The gathering winds went whistling by,
> And the wave as it towered, then fell in spray,
> Looked an emerald wall in the moonlight ray.[14]

Lines from this poem appear in Melville's *Moby Dick* among his quotations from literature on the whale. *The Summons Answered,* written in a similar style, was Poe's favorite. In the first verses three midnight revelers leave their cups at the village tavern in merry glee. Their songs are stilled, however, in the murky night as they pass the place of the dead. Boldly one of them knocks on a tomb door, which is

[14] *Ibid.,* p. 186.

opened by a cold hand that draws him in. Here he spends a gruesome night, haunted by thoughts of a restless and wasted life. This poem seems hardly as well sustained throughout as *The Drowned Mariner,* and is not improved by the moralizing at the end. Mrs. Oakes Smith is at her best when she gets outside herself and gives an objective picture, as in the first stanza:

> Stout men and bold were the bacchanals three,
> Who left the inn that night —
> And they were trolling a merry glee
> Out under the clear starlight.
> To steady themselves their home to reach,
> They placed a hand on the shoulder of each —
> In friendly mood were they;
> The white owl starts with a quivering screech
> At the midnight roundelay.[15]

Poe gives Mrs. Oakes Smith higher praise as a poet than her reputation in the succeeding years would justify. She does, however, stand out as possibly the most original and most versatile of the minor poets of her time, and is equally happy in lyrics moving with spirited swing or showing a delicate fancy.

Gifted with a fertile mind and endowed with an initiative and an indefatigable spirit which were never daunted, she tried her hand at many of the forms of writing then in vogue. The drama, particularly the romantic tragedy, children's stories, the romance in the style of Cooper, as well as that with the supernatural and symbolic machinery of the German tale, the transcendental novel and the sentimental novel aiming at definite reforms, and essays with a practical theme such as the needs of women, — all these were attempted, and some with no little success.

In 1848 Mrs. Sigourney, one of the most prolific minor

[15] *Poetical Writings of Elizabeth Oakes Smith,* 1845, p. 190.

poets of the period, wrote Elizabeth Oakes Smith, "I have been delighted with some extracts that I have seen from the Tragedy, which you mentioned in your last, that you was occupied in writing."[16] This was evidently *Jacob Leisler* or *Old New York,* which is referred to in a current magazine for July, 1850,[17] but which was not produced or published until 1853. Mrs. Oakes Smith used as a basis for her plot an incident in early local history, which had also inspired Cornelius Matthews, an editor of New York, to write in 1848 a play by the same title, but with more realistic treatment.[18]

Mrs. Oakes Smith was decidedly a novice at play-writing, but in comparing her work with that of some of her predecessors, one may at least learn what she tried to do. One of the best remembered writers to handle American history effectively in drama was Richard Penn Smith, of Philadelphia. Between 1825 and 1830 were written and produced his *Eighth of January,* featuring Andrew Jackson; *William Penn,* concerned with Indian themes; and *The Triumph of Plattsburg,* based on an incident in the War of 1812. The second held the stage until 1842, but the author, in the meantime, influenced by French and English drama, turned to tragedy and romance. The plays of this type, however, which stand out as the most striking achievements of the thirties, are the romantic tragedies of Robert Montgomery Bird, also of Philadelphia.[19] His *Gladiator* (1831), which was received with great enthusiasm when produced by Forrest in England in 1836, continued to be acted by him in this country until 1872. Of the contemporary playwrights in New York working on this same dramatic form Willis was

[16] Letter of May 1, 1848, in Library of M. H. S.

[17] *International Weekly Miscellany of Literature, Art, and Science.*

[18] A. H. Quinn, *A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War,* New York and London, 1923, pp. 276–277.

[19] *Ibid.,* Chap. IX.

probably the most important. In 1837 he won the prize offered by the actress Josephine Clifton for the play best suited to her abilities, by writing *Bianca Visconti,* which was produced in the same year in the principal cities of this country. Better than this in characterization was his *Tortesa the Usurer* (1839), for the plot of which he was in part indebted to *Romeo and Juliet* and to *The Winter's Tale.*[20]

To the romantic tragedy, which up to this time had been written mainly with a Continental setting, Mrs. Oakes Smith was most attracted. She chose her theme, however, as has been mentioned, from American history, and allowed her imagination to play freely in developing her plot. Her chief characters are Leisler, the governor of New York in 1690 supported by its democratic citizens; Sloughter, the crown governor; and Elizabeth, wife of Leisler. The plot is largely concerned with hostilities between the two governors and their followers. The author has added further complications, however, in Elizabeth's earlier marriage to Sloughter, from whom she has fled to this country. Leisler is agonized by his wife's confession of her first marriage, but does not know that Sloughter is her husband. Almost beside himself, he consents to be taken prisoner by the crown governor's men to save bloodshed. The crisis comes when Elizabeth enters Sloughter's presence to plead for her husband. On the discovery of her identity, vengeance is taken, and Leisler is executed according to custom; she dies, however, in his arms at the scaffold, and Sloughter loses his victim.

In this tragedy there are some stirring poetic passages, strong dramatic situations, and excellent characterizations, particularly of Sloughter and Elizabeth; but the technique shows an unpracticed hand. Elizabeth's escape from Sloughter and subsequent marriage to Leisler is not made clear, and Sloughter's appearance for almost the first time in the last

[20] *Ibid.*

act is a defect. The influence of Elizabethan tragedy is very noticeable in the use of omens, the proximity of comedy and pathos, and the combination of prose and blank verse. The same characteristics may be found in the author's unpublished play, *The Roman Tribute*,[21] having its setting in Constantinople in the fifth century when that city was exempt from destruction because of the tribute paid by Theodosius to the conquering Attila. This play, which was acted in Philadelphia for one week in 1850 with elaborate scenic effect, has some tense and well-conceived situations and clever jesting on the part of the fool Petrus; but the plot does not hang together well, nor does it move in a sure direction.

According to Mrs. Oakes Smith's journal, Mrs. Anna Mowatt took the leading part in *Jacob Leisler* at the Broadway Theatre in the winter of 1853,[22] but on account of illness was not able long to continue this engagement, of which no other record has been found. Mrs. Oakes Smith also mentioned that the drama was presented in Albany and Washington, but she gave no clue as to the dates of its appearance. In 1854 the popular actress Julia Dean took the rôle of Elizabeth Leisler at New Orleans. *The Louisville Journal* at the time gave the author very high praise [23] which would hardly be acceded to by present-day critics of that period. However, although *Jacob Leisler* was her only published play, it seems probable that had Mrs. Oakes Smith mastered the technique of the drama she might have won distinction in that field.

The works which brought Mrs. Oakes Smith most profit, but which are of slight literary importance, were her tiny

[21] This play is among Mrs. Oakes Smith's unpublished writings to be placed eventually in the Library of the Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine.

[22] This was after February 9 according to the journal.

[23] Copied in *The Home Journal*, Mar. 4, 1854.

volumes of stories for children. In 1839 she had published *Riches Without Wings,* a little book of the Sunday School variety, which went through three editions and brought offers from magazines for her to write at her own price. From 1845 to 1848 at least six volumes of stories for children by Mrs. Oakes Smith were published. *The True Child,* printed in Boston in 1845, seems to be the first collection, and contains fairy tales, nature stories, others with a moral lesson added, and poems. A similar book, *Stories for Good Children,* came out in Philadelphia in 1847. Three volumes called *Rosebud, The Mosscup,* and *Dandelion,* published first in Boston, 1845, were printed later in Buffalo, the last two going through six editions. The stories do not differ particularly from her earlier ones except that a few new types are added. There are chapters on dogs, Indian tales, and one story of Salem witchcraft. Some, such as *The Dead Moth* in *Dandelion,* or *The Wanderer* in *The Mosscup,* have much charm and originality. The story of *The Dead Moth* is dainty and graceful at the beginning in its personification of tiny insects, and suggests the Mother Goose rhyme, *Who Killed Cock Robin;* its unity is perhaps marred at the end, however, by a moral and religious application. In *Inadizzie or The Wanderer,* one of the Indian Iagou's tales, are related the adventures of a young warrior who, by wearing a serpent's tongue about his neck, leads a charmed life. To avoid danger he is changed at different times to a stone and a turtle; and the story ends with the transformation of his wife into a honey bee because she prefers eating bears' tongues to following her husband in his wanderings westward.

Indian romance, started in the main by Cooper during the early twenties and continued through the forties, had already found favor with many other writers before Mrs. Oakes Smith undertook her work of authorship. Not all, it

is true, had agreed with Cooper in his treatment of the Indian. Bird, it will be remembered, in his *Nick of the Woods,* published in 1837, painted him in the darkest colors, while Simms, in *The Yemassee,* published in 1835, gave a more accurate transcript from life. Most imitators of Cooper put more emphasis on incident than on character development; but Mrs. Oakes Smith's *Western Captive* holds its interest mainly by its vivid portrayal of character, and, as in the Leatherstocking tales, the Indian is idealized.

This romance, published in 1842, was her first book of any importance in prose, and it is doubtful if she ever did anything better. It was one of the earliest cheap paper-covered publications and brought in $2500 in the first four days of its sale, although Mrs. Oakes Smith received but $100 for the work. Books, she wrote in her autobiography, never yielded much return; she was, however, well paid for magazine work while there was a demand for it. She was usually able to find a market for her poems, yet realized but fifty dollars on *The Sinless Child.*[24]

The Western Captive was translated into German in 1847, probably on account of the popularity of Cooper's novels in Germany; but Mrs. Oakes Smith's narrative lacks the vigor and swift, sure movement of his tales. The setting is for the most part at Tippecanoe, where the motives of jealousy, self-sacrifice, vindictiveness, and love play an important part in the action of the chief characters. The author has excelled in the characterization of Tecumseh and Swaying Reed, the captive maid, who returns his love and is torn by that passion and the desire to go back to her Anglo-Saxon kindred. The negotiations between Harrison and Tecumseh and the treacherous destruction of Tippecanoe in the chief's absence, serve as historical foundation for the story.

[24] *Selections from the Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith,* p. 99.

Three other books by Mrs. Oakes Smith which show the influence of Cooper are *Black Hollow, Bald Eagle,* and *The Sagamore of Saco,* published in the paper-covered dime novel series by Beadle and Adams: the first in 1847, the last two in 1864. *Bald Eagle,* which was written for *The United States Gazette* of Philadelphia and received a prize of $150, was to be, according to the *Gazette's* directions, a "judicious intermixture of patriotism and love." Both this and *Black Hollow,* in which the witch of Black Hollow is the leading figure, are Revolutionary tales and highly romantic. Character development is stressed in *Bald Eagle* more than incident, and the love theme, which involves both Indians and whites, affords an opportunity for strong contrasts. Although *The Sagamore of Saco,* based on Indian history in Maine, has more narrative interest than *Bald Eagle,* the latter was more widely read, as it was published in London in 1870, and again in New York in 1882.

During the early part of the nineteenth century the work of the German romanticists was introduced, for the most part, through periodicals, to the American public. The Ticknor brothers, who went to Germany in 1815 and remained for two years, came back with much the same zeal to make German literature felt in America that Carlyle later showed in England. Although their efforts were not at once rewarded, this culture steadily made its way, the period of greatest public interest being between 1833 and 1845, at the same time that transcendentalism was gaining a firm hold in New England.[25] Many translations from Hoffman and Fouqué may be found in magazines of the day, and doubtless Mrs. Oakes Smith had read *Peter Schlemihl* and *Undine,* to which her most unusual attempt in fiction, *The Salamander,* bears some resemblance. Her imitation of

[25] S. H. Goodnight, *German Literature in American Magazines Prior to 1846,* Madison, Wisconsin, 1907, p. 34.

German romanticists in style and supernatural machinery enlisted some interest in Germany, although it cannot be ascertained that the book was translated. A friend of Mrs. Oakes Smith, traveling in Europe, wrote her that while he was in Germany he found the students of Heidelberg enthusiastic in praise of the book, and, curiously, they considered it the most original work published in this country.[26]

Authoritative English criticism was far less favorable.

> Love of the tawdry [writes a reviewer in *The Athenæum,* London, for Jan. 6, 1849] seems to have infected American writers. . . . Mrs. Oakes Smith is thoroughly in the fashion. Not only in her introduction, written *in propria persona,* but also in the legend, where she tries to assume the German manner, we have grand words and sonorous epithets "tossed about" most remorselessly, till we feel in the case of people who are pelted with sublimities — and till the most bloodless page of the most academical writer of our most Augustan period would seem natural and welcome by comparison.

American readers were better disposed toward the book. In a letter of 1849 Mrs. Sigourney asked the author if her *Salamander* pleased her as much as it had others, and Longfellow wrote Mr. J. T. Fields that he had read nothing for a week but *The Salamander* by Mrs. Oakes Smith.[27]

The "late Helfenstein" is named as the author of the book and E. O. Smith as editor, who in a short preface points out the religious character of the author and his longing for the truth. The scene of the story is the Ramapo Valley, Rockland County on the lower west side of the Hudson, a place rich in historical associations. The picturesque account, in the first chapter, of the legendary Indians inhabiting this valley — possibly a reason for dedicating the book

[26] This friend mentioned in her diary of September 27, 1855, was Dr. Samuel Eliot, the younger, an oculist of New York.

[27] Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith in MS., p. 543.

to Cooper — has little bearing on the tale of the salamander, but adds to the charm of the setting.

> Iagou sometimes came to the Lodge [Mrs. Oakes Smith writes], — an old withered man, with a very large mouth, and a voice so sweet that the Wekolis (nightingale) sat upon the roof to listen, and when she could not catch his tones she called the owl to hoot him away. But Iagou talked on, till the owl bent his round head to hear, and stared so out of his cat-like eyes that all the little birds chirped in merriment.[28]

The author's use of Schoolcraft's material must have been one reason for Longfellow's absorption in the work.[29] At all events six years later he pictured in a similar fashion the same aged maker of tales:

> At my Hiawatha's wedding
> Sat Iagoo, old and ugly,
> Sat the marvellous story-teller.

The natives of the Ramapo Valley were supplanted by a colony of iron-workers of French, German, and Dutch extraction, led by a man of strong will and pride — Hugo. These people give the proper setting for Mrs. Oakes Smith's very original tale. Her only source was a tradition which she had heard at various times among workers of iron, namely, that unless the fires in blasting furnaces were put out once in seven years, there would emerge at the end of that time a flaming creature causing death and destruction. Upon Hugo's refusal to listen to superstitious tales or to extinguish his fires after seven years of operation, there gradually appears in the furnace a fiery shape which slips out of the red-hot coals and vanishes to be embodied in the iron-

[28] *The Salamander,* N. Y., 1849, p. 22.

[29] Whittier's poem, *The Little Vanishers,* seems also to have been influenced by Mrs. Oakes Smith's work. See Pickard's *Life and Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier,* Boston, 1894, p. 481.

master's new-born son. Twin babies, a boy and girl, are given to Hugo at this time, but the boy appears and disappears magically at various intervals during the twenty years or more covered by the tale. At the end of the story he explains his existence as that of a lost angel shut out of heaven through pride of power. Other supernatural features are introduced with a vividness of color such as the sudden creation, after a fierce storm, of a hill in which are stored all varieties of earthly treasure, precious gems, molten silver, and gold. The passage which shows Hugo coveting these, even though their possession would mean losing his soul, illustrates well the manner adopted by the author in this work:

There was a slight crash, and Hugo saw as it were into the bowels of the mountain. He stooped himself and peered down, wondering from whence came so great a light. Then he saw that the earth opened, revealing a great funnel, the sides of which consisted of projections or little shelves upon which rested swarthy creatures, whose eyes were gems, and lighted the cavern. As Hugo looked, they each turned themselves heavily and rolled their eyes upon him; and as they did so, each lifted a filmy paw, and showed a jewel which he held beneath, so bright as to dazzle the eyes and cast a flash like that of the firefly when he lifteth his wings. Hugo felt his heart burning with desire; he longed to reach out his hand and seize the wealth held under those black claws; but he was at a loss what to take, for every moment one more gorgeous than the last met his eyes.

Still peering downward, he beheld upon the floor of the cavern a huge brown creature studded with crimson, which clung to the ground as the haliotis clings to the rock; but seeing the eager desire of Hugo, he lifted himself and showed what he held concealed; and the man saw *a burning triangle, with a word written in fire,* and he knew that that was the word which spoken gives dominion over the whole earth.

Hugo roused himself with a great shout, trying to pronounce the word; three times did he shout, and three times did the word escape him; as when a person would sneeze and the power is lost just in the act, so was it with him, and he was filled with a great

rage. When he would have tried again, he felt a finger soft and cool laid in the shape of a cross upon his lips, whereat the oaths which were gathering there fell backward and he saw the fair stately form of his wife looking tenderly upon him, but she did not speak. When Hugo would have spread forth his arms to her, he met only the night air; the pale stars were shining reproachfully upon him, and the summer air lifted his locks from his bare head.[30]

Redemption through love and obedience seems to be the main theme of the tale. After many temptations this is achieved by Hugo and the lost angel with the aid of the iron-master's daughter, who has transcendent strength of spirit. The salamander or lost angel must make his exit, however, as he came, through the fiery furnace. Toward this dramatic climax the action steadily proceeds, and with the exception of the rather lumbering introduction the story here is more closely knit than in the author's realistic novels.

In *Shadow Land or The Seer,* published in 1852, Mrs. Oakes Smith discourses on the nature of dreams with personal allusions as well as references to eminent men and writers. She intimates that Poe lacked faith in dreams and attempted to dupe the public with that in which he had no belief. Remarkable psychic powers are said to have been hers, but in her discussion of the connections between the material and the spiritual world, she carries her theories further than most people would care to go.

One who had read *The Salamander* and *Shadow Land* would not be surprised to find in Mrs. Oakes Smith's writings a flavor of transcendentalism. She was of too practical a nature, however, to give herself up completely to the mystical philosophy indulged in by the group at Brook Farm and their sympathizers. The movement was also on the wane when she published her romance *Bertha and Lily,*[31]

[30] *The Salamander,* pp. 71–75.

[31] Published in New York, Boston, and Cincinnati, 1854, and by two London houses.

in which its influence may be detected. The story is set in Beech Glen, a picturesque country village in the valley of the Delaware at a distance of about a hundred miles from the city of New York. Here the traditional narrowness and intolerance of an isolated community, particularly on the subjects of religion and philanthropy, are apparent. There are two notable exceptions, however; Ernest Helfenstein, the young pastor, and Bertha, a newcomer to the town, whose sad and mysterious past is gradually revealed, are both inspired by idealistic theories. These they put into effect by attempting to educate two foundlings from the Alms House. It is finally disclosed that Lily, one of the charges, is the long lost daughter of Bertha. Before this revelation, the child's father, Nathan Underhill, comes to Bertha, whom he had deceived, with an offer of marriage and is met by her steadfast resistance to his pleas. Overcome by the conflict of his remorse and of his reviving passions, he dies while attempting with desperate entreaties to win her compliance to his will. Her past experiences have so wrought upon her nature that Ernest feels her cold and emotionless, and turns in preference to his cousin, the affectionate and lovely Julia, until she, realizing that Bertha stands higher in his estimation and would make the better mate, refuses his offers. The idealization of a character who had been through such a bitter and humiliating experience is an unusual feature of the book, and was possibly suggested by Mrs. Gaskell's *Ruth,* published a year earlier.

Contemporary criticism varied in its estimate of the book. "Mrs. Oakes Smith has poetic sensibility," it was observed in *Putnam's Monthly* for October, 1854, "has strong feeling of the sufferings of her sex, and writes with great earnestness, but as an artist she is deficient. . . ." George Ripley of the *Tribune* felt that the expounding of her doctrines impeded the movement of the narrative, but was delighted with

her "idealistic philosophy," and called attention to "her radical but not rabid theories, her excellent characterization, and quiet humor." [32]

No other novel of Elizabeth Oakes Smith's is so permeated with her own personality, possibly because the book is presented in the form of a journal, written alternately by Ernest Helfenstein and Bertha. The former, it will be observed, bears the name Mrs. Oakes Smith frequently used as her pseudonym. Much of the account of her childhood in her autobiography is exactly parallel with Bertha's recital of the experiences of her early years. Despite the faults of structure and occasional hysterical situations, the reader's attention is held by the sincerity of the author's convictions; and while the book may not claim high commendation as a romance, it does have special interest as the expression of Mrs. Oakes Smith's views on social, moral, and religious questions.

Sentimental novels were probably the best-sellers during the fifties and immediately preceding the Civil War. Many wept over Susan Warner's *Wide, Wide World* (1850) or were thrilled by Arthur's *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* (1855) and certainly no book did more to arouse public spirit against slavery than Harriet Beecher Stowe's masterpiece, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). Mrs. Oakes Smith, who was very active in philanthropic work during her residence in New York and who was especially solicitous for the welfare of the newsboys, reached the heart of an impressionable public by writing in 1854 her novel of reform, *The Newsboy*. This was partly the result of social work in which she was associated with Mrs. Hildreth, wife of the historian, under the auspices of the Young Men's Christian Union.

Putnam's Monthly for February, 1855, gives the style, structure, and characterization of the book most scathing

[32] *New York Weekly Tribune*, Aug. 26, 1854.

criticism; but as it was evidently a best-seller, going through twelve editions the first year, an examination of its contents will help to indicate the reasons for contemporary interest. The main narrative centres about the figure of the newsboy Bob, who, like many of Oliver Optic's heroes, rises from miserable poverty to a position of honor through his pluck and kindness of heart. Melodrama plays a large part in his shifting fortunes, particularly when he helps to find the abductors of a wealthy merchant's child. The vivid pictures of New York slums bring to mind the haunts of the London poor in Dickens's novels, with which Mrs. Oakes Smith was familiar. Close by the region of Five Points, then as now the worst district in New York, was the city prison, the Tombs, still called by that name since its rebuilding in 1898. Formerly it was a forbidding stone structure with an execution yard within. "It was a bright thought," says the author, "that of locating a prison in the midst of evil doers, to admonish them perpetually that the way of the transgressor is hard." In such surroundings the newsboys congregated and sought their nightly shelter. Sometimes they spent an hilarious evening at the Bowery Theatre, where there were cheap seats in the pit and gallery, and policemen were occasionally needed to quiet their uproar. A wide extent of lower New York through the Battery past the Bowling Green to the South Ferry was the resort of abandoned waifs and outcasts. One feels the author probing into the causes of sin in her account of lawless living, while she compares identical vices among the rich and poor, giving to the former no quarter.

Like that of earlier novels, the structure of *The Newsboy* is loose, the narrative shifting occasionally from first to third person; while there are numerous tense and dramatic situations, they are not closely related, nor do they lead to any striking outcome. Whatever the faults of *The Newsboy,*

however, it seems certain, since the book's sale was wide, that Mrs. Oakes Smith's sympathetic treatment of the city poor helped to arouse greater concern for the situation in the New York slums.

In reviewing Mrs. Oakes Smith's prose writings, one can not fail to be impressed with the versatility of her gifts and the complexity of her individuality. Living, as she said, her most perfect life in a dream world, where she had such visions as are pictured in *The Salamander*, writing at one time stories in which she entered into the minds and hearts of children, and again essays filled with abstruse reflections, she yet was eminently practical, keeping in close touch with the movements of her time. Seeing the absurdity of women's dress in the day of trailing skirts, bustles, and tight stays, she wrote in 1852 a little book called *Hints on Dress and Beauty*, which has a distinct literary flavor as well as a practical application in advocating dress reforms. Her chapter headings are charming lines on women's attire taken from Marlowe, Jonson, Suckling, Keats, and other poets. She recommends independence in dress, and would avoid foolish fashions, choosing instead sensible and graceful apparel. Women, she believed, should seek beauty in every stage of life.

> I see no need of decay and dotage [she writes], of unloveliness and neglect, but each sphere well filled; each period beautiful in its completeness.[33]

Those who knew Mrs. Oakes Smith in her later years remember particularly the daintiness of her attire which added attraction to the natural grace and dignity of her person, hardly diminished by the advancing years.

One of the most important reasons for remembering Elizabeth Oakes Smith today, is her persistent endeavor,

[33] *Hints on Dress and Beauty*, Syracuse, N. Y., 1853, p. 75.

both in writing and on the lecture platform, to secure wider opportunities for women. It was this inquiry into the problems of her own sex that led her to write in 1851 for the *New York Tribune* the series of papers which was in the same year published in pamphlet form as *Woman and Her Needs.*[34] Horace Greeley was quite impartial in his attitude toward Mrs. Oakes Smith's opinions. He made room in his columns for scurrilous attacks on her principles, never using his own pen in her defence, but stating that the writer was amply able to defend herself. In reply to her protest, he asserted that "she was too thin-skinned for a woman who challenged abuse by the very work she was doing in the world."[35] An earlier book on the subject of the emancipation of women had come out in this country in 1844 under the title *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* by Margaret Fuller. During the transcendental movement in New England the papers making up this volume were inspired, and they appeared in *The Dial* in July, 1843, as *The Great Lawsuit, or Man vs. Men, Woman vs. Women.* While this book shows a much wider use of literary sources than *Woman and Her Needs,* it seems probable that the latter, because of its practical treatment of the subject, secured a larger number of readers and perhaps encouraged the reprinting of Margaret Fuller's book in 1855 with a preface by Horace Greeley.

In *Woman and Her Needs* Mrs. Oakes Smith argued that the intelligence of woman should be recognized and that she should not be compelled to dwarf herself lest she be thought unfeminine. In her day the efficiency of women was limited by indoor labor. Liberty, she maintained, was as safe for women as for men. If men had been held down for centuries by the restrictions which had hedged in women, pettiness of

[34] Later edition in 1853.

[35] Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith in MS., p. 464.

character usually attributed to one sex might have been just as noticeable in the other. She defended the right of women to their individuality and argued that the sphere of men and women should be limited only by capacity. Her discussion of marriage and the subordinate place of the majority of women under such contracts foreshadows much that was thought and said before the appearance of Ibsen's *Doll's House* in 1879. On women and the ballot she ventured opinions, startling to the conservative minds of her day, which seem now merely sensible and practical:

> The fact of her dropping a ticket into a receptacle of the kind, does not look hazardous to her femininity; she might seem to do this with little or no commotion, and return in conscious dignity to her household, and there infuse a braver cheer, and instil into the immature judgments of those committed to her care nobler lessons of life.[36]
>
> I confess there is something humiliating in this cry of Women's Rights [she adds in a later chapter]. It seems acknowledging, on our part, to imbecility and all the odious vices that grow out of a feeble and oppressed creation. Unless we can do, as well as talk, it were better to be silent. God forbid I should encourage a race of vixens; it is because I desire to see woman nobly beyond these poor, mean tendencies that I urge her to the full demand of her being.[37]

Mrs. Oakes Smith concluded by emphasizing that an abundant life is what all humanity, regardless of sex, desires.

The sale of this little twenty-five cent pamphlet was very gratifying to the author, who was paid a fair percentage of the earnings by the publishers. Commendatory letters came to her from prominent people in various parts of the country. Words of encouragement were also sent her from Robert Owen in England. Her principles were accepted by such men as Theodore Parker, Emerson, James Freeman

[36] *Woman and Her Needs,* Syracuse, N. Y., 1851, pp. 90–91.

[37] *Ibid.,* pp. 105–106.

Clarke, William Lloyd Garrison, and Wendell Phillips; many in her immediate literary circle, however, plainly showed their disapproval of her views. Mrs. Sigourney, in a letter written June 4, 1851, spoke strongly against women's rights, saying "she would keep woman in her own sphere and would condemn her attempt to fill men's places." The editor of *Godey's Lady's Book*, Mrs. Sarah J. Hale, who had been pleasantly associated with Mrs. Oakes Smith in literary work, also decidedly opposed her views.[38] Another critic was Richard Grant White, who had looked with interest upon her literary endeavors, but censured her severely when she publicly became a champion of political and economic rights for women.[39]

Although the books of Mrs. Oakes Smith went through many editions in her day, in none of her published works in prose did she gain real distinction. Possibly she tried too many kinds of writing to gain high repute in any one; but the rapidity and ease with which she wrote volumes of such a varied nature proves the truth of Griswold's statement that she was a "woman of quick apprehension, gifted and accomplished." If she had limited herself to one type of novel and aimed to perfect her work in a restricted field, it would seem that she might have overcome her weakness in construction and by exercising her powers of skilful characterization and artistic expression have written at least one book of fiction which would have had a permanent place in American letters.

[38] Mrs. Oakes Smith wrote for the *Lady's Magazine,* Boston, edited by Mrs. Hale from 1826–37.

[39] This was noted in Mrs. Oakes Smith's Journal, Jan. 21, 1861.

CHAPTER IX

ELIZABETH OAKES SMITH ON THE LECTURE PLATFORM

In *Woman and Her Needs* Mrs. Oakes Smith urged, through the press, claims which she was soon to present from the public platform. While she was possessed with the zeal of a reformer and the courage to do all that she might to advance her cause, she was also strongly influenced by financial reasons to try her powers as a lecturer. Magazine writing, by which she and her husband had mainly supported their family during the forties, was not as lucrative in the fifties, possibly for the reason that editors were able to get a large quantity of mediocre material at a low rate; and in the lecture field she saw a hope of more substantial reward than she could gain by literary work. There was the added attraction of varied adventure; but the criticism she received when defending her cause with her pen was mild compared to the storms of protest and even maligning which followed her career as a public speaker. In her journal of January 21, 1861, several years after her lecture tours were ended, she wrote a frank explanation of her course:

> When decline in literary compensation throughout the country rendered it necessary for me to do more, and something in another channel, I was forced, as I may say, by mental proclivities, and physical necessities to speak publicly, and yet I never did, and never would make poverty my plea. I never would appeal to the sympathies, or the compassion of the public. I insisted upon standing entirely upon mental capabilities — and when well meaning friends were disposed to put my efforts in this field upon the score of pecuniary and family necessities, I discountenanced it, even to the giving of offence. Some even went so far as to blame Mr. Smith, to uphold me at his expense. This I rebuked, I am afraid

sternly, for I would not be maudlin or unjust, nor knowingly a beggar. If I had abilities I preferred to be accepted on the ground of capacity alone as men claim to be accepted.

Seba Smith was not interested in woman's rights; hence he never gave his approval to his wife's activities in their behalf, and after her first fall and winter lecture season wrote in a letter to his sister on May 9, 1852, "How long this filibustering is to last, Heaven only knows." It so happened, however, that circumstances made it necessary for the family to depend largely on Mrs. Oakes Smith for support during her seven years' experience as a public speaker. Yet she writes in her journals that the attitude of her sons, who did not like to see her in the public eye, made her unhappy, so that after securing enough remuneration to cover actual needs, she often cut short her lecture tours, refusing to make further engagements.

One of her first recorded lectures was given in Hope Chapel, Brooklyn, June 2, 1851, on a topic already treated in her writing, *Dress, Its Social and Aesthetic Relations.*[1] To some this subject may have seemed rather unimportant as an introduction to her more serious themes. Her opinions on this matter, however, are of interest, especially since they were at variance with those of reformers of the day. Lucy Stone's Quaker sense of propriety had been shocked when, in 1848, Mrs. Oakes Smith appeared at the Woman's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York, in a white gown which exposed her neck and arms, and on that account she refused to give assent to her nomination for president of the convention. Others who observed her throughout her career were glad that she did not lose her feminine charm in upholding the cause of women.

Lectures on literature, religion, and various reforms were

[1] Cf. Oscar Wilde, *The Relation of Dress to Art* in *Decorative Art in America,* N. Y., 1906, pp. 49–54.

common in the city of New York at this period and enthusiastically attended. Stuyvesant Hall, on lower Broadway, was used by Henry James, Senior, for a series of lectures in 1851, and by Thackeray in 1852. In Hope Chapel, Emerson and Oliver Wendell Holmes conducted lecture courses during the winters of 1852 and 1853 respectively. In both these places Elizabeth Oakes Smith addressed appreciative audiences.

Richard Grant White, the well-known critic and Shakesperean scholar, did not favor her public speaking, as has been mentioned; but he pictures her vividly as she must have appeared in maturity when she entered the lecture field.

> A fair sweet presence rises before me, that of Elizabeth Oakes Smith. America has known no truer poetess than this lady in all her years of nurture. No womanly face was ever more perfectly chiseled than hers, due regard having been had meanwhile, to the fact that a woman and not a statue, was being formed. That calm, pleasant face, those soft and kindly luminous brown eyes, and that wealth of waved dark hair, drawn low over her fair white forehead, in the fashion of the time, won many a heart, the homage of which was kept by the always kind and tender words flowing from the faultless lips, seldom opened but to emit a sparkle. Her mouth was exquisitely small, with a chin to correspond. Her bearing was majestically grand, her manners refined and dignified, yet cordial, and taking her all in all, she looked, acted, and moved the born patrician.[2]

Mrs. Oakes Smith referred in her journals to her innate love of luxury and ease, but felt that the gratifying of these desires might have led to a life of idleness in which she could not have found satisfaction.

While she was not the first woman to lecture on a public platform in America, she was the first, according to her own

[2] Printed extract from a longer article, not identified, entitled *People I Recall.* In possession of Mr. W. J. Bok.

statement, to secure admission to the lyceum for her sex. She was invited to Lynn in October, 1851. Mr. James N. Buffum, who was engaging the lyceum speakers, wrote her of the strong prejudice against women lecturers, but concluded with the statement, "After a full discussion of the propriety of taking such a new and extraordinary step, my views being opposed by one or two members I obtained a decided vote to have you invited." The newspaper account of this lecture on the subject *Manhood,* refers to the "deep interest manifested to hear a woman in a new department of instruction, from which the customs of society had heretofore excluded her."[3] This was the beginning of a brilliant career as lyceum lecturer throughout the Atlantic states, the West, and the South, which continued so successfully for seven years that at the end of that time, a gentleman of Kentucky, writing to secure her services at a lecture course in Louisville, observed, "A circle of the first literary stars of the Union will be seen during the course and the constellation would be incomplete without you."[4]

It would be difficult to estimate the influence of the lyceum on popular education from the time the movement was well started in 1830 until the outbreak of the Civil War. Throughout the country this organization stood for progress: political leaders, zealous reformers, and promoters of culture for its own sake disseminated their ideas from the lyceum platform, and eager, enthusiastic audiences continually crowded their lecture halls. Founded in 1826, the lyceum had grown appreciably by 1831, when 1000 of these organizations sent delegates to the National Convention in New York. A year later Emerson made the lyceum platform his pulpit, and for more than thirty years was the most

[3] Undated clipping from a Lynn newspaper.

[4] Letter from W. W. Fosdick, Louisville, Kentucky, September 23, 1857. In Library of M. H. S.

distinguished figure in this movement. Other typical speakers were John B. Gough, whose vigorous and spectacular pleas for prohibition impressed the popular mind, and Wendell Phillips, who lectured on a variety of subjects but was most earnest in his advocacy of abolition. These lecturers, however, whether or not of great distinction, were accepting engagements as a means of livelihood, and thus were not entirely altruistic in their purposes. To enter the ranks of this group of workers who received their wages from the public, was not unpleasing to Elizabeth Oakes Smith; and the early fifties proved also an opportune time for her to present the theme in which she ardently believed, the emancipation of women.

In October, 1851, she seems to have made her first plea from the platform for the cause she advocated.[5] The occasion was not a lyceum engagement, however, but the second Woman's Rights Convention in Worcester, and Mrs. Paulina Davis in reporting the affair wrote, " Elizabeth Oakes Smith honored herself by her fearless advocacy of the truth, and by her graceful eloquence made many new friends to the cause." [6] This was twenty-three years after Frances Wright had started her work as the first woman to speak on political subjects in America, but Mrs. Oakes Smith's recollections of her lecture in 1839 were doubtless still vivid. The same year that Frances Wright began public speaking, in 1828, Sarah and Angelina Grimké had freed their slaves in North Carolina and come North to lecture on the evils of slavery. In 1847 Susan B. Anthony and Lucy Stone gave their maiden speeches on the subjects of temperance and woman's rights respectively; and since becoming a minister

[5] E. C. Stanton, S. B. Anthony, and M. J. Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage,* N. Y., 1881, Vol. I, p. 231.

[6] P. W. Davis, *History of the National Woman's Rights Movement for Twenty Years,* N. Y., 1871, p. 19.

of the Liberal Quakers in 1818, Lucretia Mott had journeyed through the Atlantic states and the West preaching her faith and the abolition of slavery, and in the later forties had urged from the public platform the granting of wider opportunities to women. It is not recorded, however, that these pioneer workers for equal suffrage carried their message, as did Elizabeth Oakes Smith, to the lyceum.

In the fall of 1851 she spoke at lyceums in New York, Worcester, and Boston on the subject of *Womanhood,* and wrote Griswold on November 9 of having many applications for lectures. She was also associated with Wendell Phillips in his agitation of the slavery question, which was in the fifties excluded from the lyceum. A letter written her by him December 25, 1851, indicates her strong interest in the cause.[7]

. . . I read Mr. Garrison your kind message and honorable mention. Grateful appreciation of him has not yet become so common as by any means to pall; so you imagine the interest with which he listened. You strengthen, then, our almost weary hands when you assure us that we may be confident there are true hearts afar off and in other circles that beat cordially for us and for our great object, and remember us in their deepest thoughts. I am hurrying from lecture to lecture, doing my best. Pardon this cold note; it is meant most brotherly.

Yours truly,

Wendell Phillips.

In the winter of 1851 and 1852 she toured through New England, where her most interesting experience was in Concord. Emerson had heard her previously in Boston, and was doubtless instrumental in bringing her to Concord, as she spent several weeks in his home. In her recollections of this visit given in a lecture during the eighties Emerson is pictured as an interlocutor.

[7] Republished by courtesy of Edward Bok.

On one occasion he sought to know her own aspirations.

"Well, and what do you most desire in life?" he asked me unexpectedly one day.

"To see my sex ennobled," I replied.

"Have you faith in this great change, which you advocate?"

"Most certainly, or I should be devoid of enthusiasm in advocating it."

"Then it will be realized," he replied.[8]

On the evening of Mrs. Oakes Smith's lecture in Concord, December 31, 1851, Emerson was engaged to speak in another town; but Thoreau and Alcott were in her audience and congratulated her at the close. Letters from both several years later would indicate their friendly interest. Bronson Alcott was sufficiently impressed by her literary acumen to ask her opinion of his daughter's work.

My daughter Louisa has some stories by her that she would like to see printed in some of the magazines. . . . If you shall think it worth the while, and will take the trouble to write, saying whether she may send you a sample. I think them excellent, and shall be pleased and proud to find they suit you.

We are now settled in Concord beside Emerson and Hawthorne.

My family are well, with the exception of our third child, Elizabeth, about whose recovery from a long illness we are all anxious just now.[9]

Thoreau wrote, in a letter dated February 19, 1855:

After due consultation and inquiry, I am sorry to be obliged to say that we cannot make it worth your while to come to Concord this season. The curators of the Lyceum, before which you lectured three years ago, tell me that they have already exceeded their means. Our New England towns are not so enterprising as some western ones in this respect, and Mr. Foster's society, which used to be our next resource, furnishing a meeting-house and an audience, no longer exists. He is settled in Princeton in this state.

[8] *Selections from the Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith*, p. 142.

[9] Dated Mar. 4, 1858. Republished by courtesy of Edward Bok.

Mrs. Emerson sends her love, and wishes me to say that she would be glad to have you spend a day or two with her after Mr. Emerson's return, which will probably be about the middle of March, and she will not forget that you have a lecture of Margaret Fuller in your bag. I remember well meeting you at Mr. Emerson's in company with Mr. Alcott, and that we did not fatally disagree. You were fortunate to be there at the same time with Mr. Alcott, who diffuses sunshine wherever he goes.

I hear that he says the times are so hard that the people can not have him to converse. Are not these hard times indeed? As for the good time that is coming, let us not forget that there is a good time going, too, and see that we dwell on that eternal ridge between the two which neither comes nor goes.[10]

In Thoreau's life, by Sanborn, there is reference to Elizabeth Oakes Smith which seems more characteristic of the hermit of Walden. In answer to a Concord parson's objections to what Mrs. Oakes Smith said in her lecture about the clergy as well as to her transcendentalism, Thoreau replied:

The most important fact was that a woman said it; in that respect it was suggestive. My interview added nothing to the previous impression, rather subtracted. She was a woman in the too common sense after all. You had to substitute courtesy for sense and argument. It requires nothing less than a chivalric feeling to sustain a conversation with a lady. I carried her lecture for her in my pocket wrapped in her handkerchief; my pocket exhales cologne to this moment.[11]

After the New England trip Elizabeth Oakes Smith spent some time in the West, lecturing in various parts of Ohio and in Chicago. The criticism of one Cincinnati paper was not wholly favorable. Although high tribute was paid to her powers of objective thinking, it was indicated that her subjective reasoning was not to be trusted.[12] The Chicago

[10] Republished through courtesy of Edward Bok.

[11] F. B. Sanborn, *Henry D. Thoreau* (American Men of Letters), Boston and New York, 1917, p. 361.

[12] Undated clipping.

lecture on *The Dignity of Labor* was well spoken of by the press, but the absence of women in the audience was deprecated. In her autobiography Mrs. Oakes Smith wrote that this lecture was prepared "under the inspiration of advice she was constantly obliged to give women in straitened circumstances," who directed letters to her asking for counsel.

> Often [she says], these letters contained terrible confessions, moral obliquities, pitiful to consider, but I could see that false ideas of life, unwillingness to toil, lack of independence, lack of a true moral basis, an expectation of support through marriage, so often disappointed, was at the bottom of all these evils. I returned to these letters words of sympathy, condolence, and advice, written often when head and hands were weary and at the sacrifice of sleep.[13]

On the other hand, she felt that the division of labor between marriage partners in prosperous circumstances often needed readjustment. "In the business world," she observes, in this same lecture, "because of the burdens men assume while their wives sit idly at home, they throw themselves into their work often to the utter neglect of the higher destinies of their being."

In the spring of 1852 she went to Philadelphia, and there in company with Lucretia Mott, who did not share the prejudices of Lucy Stone against her public attire, spoke in defense of her cause. For her three lectures on the subjects *Manhood, Womanhood,* and *Our Humanity* a nominal price of fifty cents was charged.[14] In making arrangements for her coming, Miss Mott wrote on March 23, 1852, "It is gratifying as well as encouraging that the author of *Woman and Her Needs* feels constrained to lift up her voice also in behalf of her sex."

[13] Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith in MS., pp. 504–505.

[14] The *Pennsylvania Freeman* for Apr. 1, 1852, announced these lectures for Apr. 6, 8, and 10, respectively.

At the third Woman's Rights Convention in September, 1852, Elizabeth Oakes Smith again spoke eloquently and stressed the need of a woman's paper.[15] Such a paper entitled *Una* was started by Mrs. Paulina Davis in February, 1853, in Providence, Rhode Island; and Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Oakes Smith, and John Neal were among the many contributors.[16] Neal's enthusiastic support of suffrage for women had been evinced publicly at a debate in the New York Tabernacle in 1843, which Mrs. Oakes Smith reported effectively in her autobiography.

The lecture season in New York in the fall of 1852 was opened by Mrs. Oakes Smith on October 20, when she began a series of six discourses on *Cleopatra; Woman, the Inferior; Our Humanity;* and kindred topics at Hope Chapel. Nathaniel P. Willis reporting these lectures in *The Home Journal* vindicated her position as a public speaker, describing her as a "thoughtful and accomplished woman with opinions worthy of expression." He emphasized also the "elegance of her manner, the beauty of her attire, the music of her voice, and her power to hold an audience." On November 19 of this same fall Thackeray's famous lectures on *English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century* commenced at Stuyvesant Institute on lower Broadway; and his scintillating wit as well as the enthusiastic applause of his audiences were widely noted in current newspapers. Curiously, two of Thackeray's and two of Mrs. Oakes Smith's lectures, delivered on the same evenings, were given nearly equal space in the columns of the *Tribune*.[17] It is quite probable that this attention was paid to Mrs. Oakes Smith's public work largely because she was pioneering in a field up to that time rarely entered by women.

[15] E. C. Stanton, S. B. Anthony, and M. J. Gage, *History of Woman's Suffrage,* Vol. I, pp. 522, 523, 524.

[16] *Ibid.,* Vol. I, p. 246.

[17] *Tribune,* Nov. 20, 1852.

Her public engagements for the fall of 1853 started with a reading of her play, *Jacob Leisler*, to the Young Men's Association at Poughkeepsie, where she had spoken the preceding February on *The Dignity of Labor*. On November 9 she lectured to a similar organization in Toledo, Ohio, and went thence to Cleveland on November 12 and to Columbus on November 18. At the latter place she was led by her interest in philanthropy and reform to visit the institution for the blind and the penitentiary. In the newspaper report of her Toledo lecture the observation was made that she "talked like a gentleman and did not denunciate the other sex." She was not alone in presenting opinions on women's rights at this period, for in October of this same year Lucretia Mott was pleading for that cause in Kentucky,[18] and during November Lucy Stone was "addressing fashionable audiences" in Indiana.[19] In December Elizabeth Oakes Smith lectured at the lyceum of Greenwich, Rhode Island, and preached there in the Baptist Church. The enthusiasm which she aroused at the lyceum brought her a large audience on Sunday morning, where her eloquence in the pulpit stirred pastor and people.

An incident occurring in the winter of 1854 is an amusing indication of her ability to enlist and hold the sympathies of her audience. At a literary institute of Honesdale, Pennsylvania, Theodore Parker, Horace Greeley, Henry Ward Beecher, and Emerson had been engaged as speakers, and Elizabeth Oakes Smith was (on January 10) received with great favor. She was followed by a Reverend Milton Bramen from Danvers, Massachusetts, who gave his reasons for opposing woman's rights; he was able, however, to bring out so slight an audience that $20 from the surplus earned for the institute by Mrs. Oakes Smith had to be drawn out

[18] *Ibid.*, Oct. 26, 1853.
[19] *Ibid.*, Nov. 17, 1853.

to pay him.[20] If he knew to whom he was indebted for this remuneration, the reverend gentleman must have felt a curious sense of obligation.

Her lecture tours for this season extended over much the same area as before. On January 18 she lectured again at Poughkeepsie, this time on the subject *Cleopatra,* which was also her theme at Utica, New York, on February 2. Here despite a violent snowstorm she had a large audience, and went on to Rome the next night to speak on *Madame Roland.* On February 4 she was engaged in Buffalo, two nights later at Cleveland, Ohio, and for four evenings, February 9, 10, 11, and 13, she held her audiences at Tiffin of the same state. The journeys to the West were usually made comfortably by train, but often she had difficulty in getting to the small towns in the state of New York. In her journal for February 22, 1854, she writes of a "sixty mile ride to Ogdensburg in a sleigh, with no buffalo robes, through a terrible snowstorm when I thought I should perish with the cold." [21]

One of the lectures which brought her most distinction in Boston was given there December 6, 1854, on *Margaret Fuller.* The wisdom and character of this richly endowed New Englander she regarded highly, but felt that her writings were not as great as the woman herself. Although Mrs. Oakes Smith describes her Boston audience as quite appalling — "hushed, cold, and high foreheads, pale faces, intellectual shapes, and penetrating eyes fixed upon one, like so many hard-faced jurymen, sitting upon an inquest," [22] she always seemed to make a favorable impression there. Emerson was one of her first listeners in this Athens of America, as John Neal first designated it; and later, September 20, 1855,

[20] Clipping from Honesdale newspaper, Feb. 8, 1854.
[21] Mrs. Oakes Smith's Journal, Feb. 22, 1854.
[22] *Ibid.,* Sept. 21, 1855.

she appeared on the same platform with the seer of Concord. Wendell Phillips and Theodore Parker were also speakers on this occasion, which was a Woman's Rights Convention. Emerson gave an address on *The Functions and Capacities of Women,* and Mrs. Oakes Smith writes in her journal that "he analyzed with truthfulness and force the women of the past and present, but did not interpret the women of the future." She followed his remarks by delivering a poem entitled *Woman and the Times.* A number of years later at a meeting of the Free Religious Association in Boston she and George William Curtis were the chief speakers.[23]

In the winter of 1855 she took her usual journey to the West and planned to go to Kentucky, Missouri, and Louisiana, but more invitations were sent her than she could accept.

Much high praise was given her by the press; but she had her share of unfavorable criticism. She was, for instance, reported as arraying herself to attract attention, and was censured for expressing radical views on scriptural matters. An account in *The Springfield Republican* of her work as a lecturer gives equal attention to faults and merits. She had spoken at Springfield during a driving hail storm to an audience of six hundred, and was characterized as having "an earnest sentiment, delicate humor, cutting satire, a womanly appearance, and true eloquence." "Much of her illustration," the reporter writes, "was an exaggeration; many of her facts were incomplete; there was a one-sidedness to some of her arguments not consistent with equal and exact justice; but she was perhaps excusable in all this, as she boldly combatted injustice and inequalities, and disorganization. She started questions of deep social moment — questions not to be sneered at, or laughed at, or frowned down."[24]

One of her most interesting experiences during her career

[23] Undated clipping.

[24] Undated clipping.

as a lecturer was an engagement to speak on the subject of *Our Humanity* in Theodore Parker's pulpit, which had never before been open to a woman. In her journal she writes that Mr. Parker called on her, showed interest in her career, and saw no reason why a woman should not speak if she had something to say. When she told him that the subjects of her discourse on *Our Humanity* were old to him, he replied, "You presented them in a way that makes them seem new."

> As Mr. Parker sat by the fire [she writes], his slightly old-fashioned dress, very nicely worn — his yarn stockings, and broad strapped shoes, neatly tied with gall — gave to his person a quaintness and simplicity that made me think of the Pilgrim fathers. While we talked, the twilight settled almost into gloom, and the fire from the grate illumed his broad, white forehead, while his clear, young eye, for it was very vital and young-looking compared with his face, glared with fine brilliancy, and softened down his rather coarse features. I could not but observe how his brain seemed to dominate the whole person — operating like an extinguisher upon it. I thought of Socrates.[25]

Most of her lectures touched some phase of her favorite topic, the progress of women. *Womanhood*, which was the subject presented at Concord, was perhaps her most popular address and the best illustration of her powers of thought. After hearing it in Boston, E. P. Whipple, the well-known critic of the time, remarked:

> I only wished to see you make your claim good in what you attempt. You have done so. Your lecture is a poem, perhaps your best.[26]

In this discourse she contrasts woman's situation since Protestantism has held sway with her place in the days of chivalry. Woman's highest position, she asserts, is not on a pedestal, as in medieval times, but it is as man's helpmeet in

[25] Mrs. Oakes Smith's Journal, Jan. 21, 1861. [26] *Ibid.*

the outside world of thought and action as well as in the home. The part man has taken in depriving woman of such a place has not been done "wilfully but ignorantly." Her plea, she makes plain, is for the good of the race, not for woman or for man but for humanity. Hence she would have the doors of all professions open to women even though few might enter.

She did not hesitate to make criticisms that might be received unfavorably by her own sex, and disapproval or lack of interest in her arguments kept many women of the day from her lecture halls. In her journal for November 10, 1853, she writes that in Chicago, where their absence was deprecated, an Irishman said to her after her lecture, "Indade and the women ought to like you, for 'tis a good word ye're spaking for them." "Bless his innocent soul!" she adds. "He didn't know women as well as I do." At another time she writes in her diary:

> I am afraid to talk with the majority of women or even before them. Few can generalize at all. All that is said they take as personal affront. For these reasons I prefer the Lecture room.

However Elizabeth Oakes Smith was regarded by many of her sex, it seems clear that the earnestness of her purpose combined with the charm of her personality made a deep impression upon her audiences.

> Her conversation [writes the statesman Henry Clay] is enriched with knowledge gained, almost by intuition from every source. To me she is irresistibly fascinating. The intelligent beauty of her countenance, or rather, I ought to say, its animation, the classic elegance of her form, and the fruitfulness of her mind, convert you into admiration. She is a perfect model of the high-bred American matron, and a decided ornament to the country which gave her birth. Seldom has a woman in any age acquired such ascendancy by the mere force of a powerful intellect. Her smile is the play of a sunlit fountain.[27]

[27] Undated clipping.

Her success continued unabated for seven years, but because of poor health she did not make extended lecture tours after 1857. During her service as a lyceum speaker she disseminated views which unquestionably influenced public thought, and because of her cultural interests and her literary activities she reached an audience probably untouched by the more militant pleas of her sister reformers. Certainly she had a vision beyond that of the mere feminist, and in urging the extension of woman's sphere had in mind not only the emancipation of her sex, but the progress of humanity.

CHAPTER X

LITERARY FRIENDS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SMITHS IN LATER YEARS

Between 1850 and 1855, when the Smiths were still living in Brooklyn, they changed their residence several times, owing partly to Mrs. Oakes Smith's frequent absence on lecture tours; for at these seasons it was sometimes necessary to make special arrangements for the family then at home. They were located usually within walking distance of Atlantic Avenue and the old New York Ferries in a section, now teeming with an alien population, but then affording exclusive and attractive neighborhoods. During these years, as has been observed, Seba Smith and his wife were both intermittently engaged in writing.

In a letter of May 9, 1852, the former announced to his sister [1] his business prospects for the following summer. He expected to have an interest in an insurance office on Wall Street with a capital of about $700,000, "which," he said, "might enable me to take advantage of some of these golden opportunities that occur." It was perhaps his good fortune that these plans did not materialize; for it seems that the results of his speculation in Maine and of his experience with the cotton gin in the South had not given him sufficient warning to avoid further ventures. In this same letter he writes of Appleton's sea-faring and of Sidney's occupation in a mercantile house at Port-au-Prince, Hayti.

Mrs. Oakes Smith's literary friends were amazed at the amount of work she continued to do in the fifties, for her

[1] Mrs. Ann Larrabee of Bath, Me.

moments were well filled before she began her public career as a lyceum speaker. In a letter of May 1, 1848, and in another of a year from that day,[2] Mrs. Sigourney had urged an explanation of her course.

> Please let me know as a curiosity [she asks], on how many literary labors you are at present engaged; and how you find time for them and for maternal and social intercourse? . . . How many hours out of the twenty-four do you write? And when are your thinking times?

Mrs. Oakes Smith attributed her desire for constant occupation to her Puritan training as a child. In speaking of this in her autobiography she writes:

> Later in life . . . I became afflicted with a busy devil that gave me no rest. I could not be idle even when I would. I must work, read, write when others did nothing. In this way, having never suffered from any organic disability, I have done a vast amount of work in philanthropy, reform, and literature.[3]

All this activity she enjoyed; but it was certainly unusual even among the literary women of her day, and those who wrote, when compared in numbers with men of the same profession, were very much in the minority. The Carey sisters, who came to New York in 1851 against Horace Greeley's advice, managed to eke out a slender living by their contributions to magazines; yet few of their sex could depend upon writing for a competence. In her reminiscences of a fruit and flower festival given to authors by the book publishers of New York in the fall of 1855, Mrs. Oakes Smith speaks of the women as "scattered about here and there like a sparsely raisoned plum cake."[4]

[2] In Library of M. H. S.

[3] *Selections from the Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith*, p. 23.

[4] Mrs. Oakes Smith's Journal, Sept. 28, 1855. The festival occurred the previous evening.

This festival was held in the Crystal Palace built under the direction of the American Institute in 1853 in imitation of the one in London, and chartered for five years. Mrs. Oakes Smith notes that "the tables occupied by the authors were raised about a foot above the publishers," but remarks "that few were in fact ever that much above the trade." The speakers were all gentlemen, among whom she names Dr. H. D. Chapin, Pastor of the Universalist Society in New York and writer of several books, as the most brilliant. Bryant, whom she could not hear, she criticizes for wearing his hair and beard in such a way as to "totally disfigure him and to convert a fine poetic head into the resemblance of a satyr." James T. Fields, who was much applauded for the delivery of his poem, is called "a pet with the trade and a poet on a small scale." As she was in the midst of her career as a public lecturer when this festival occurred, she was conscious of a coolness among the literary women of her acquaintance who had criticized her in this new profession; but she writes that she bore their disapproval "with equanimity." [5]

Her correspondence from 1850 to 1855 reveals many interesting side-lights on literary figures of the period. Most frequently mentioned in her letters of the early fifties was Poe, for with other friends of the poet she had expressed indignation at the injustice done him by his literary executor, Rufus Griswold. This treatment is alluded to in a letter of May 30, 1850, from John Neal, who had been one of the first to encourage Poe in his literary career, and whose friendship with the Smiths dated back to their early days in Portland:

You know my opinion of Poe — he made use of me all his life long; but I never told anybody of it before; and even now I should not be willing to say as much to you, if I had not good reasons for

[5] *Ibid.*

believing that he had a knack of helping himself to others. He has been greatly overrated by some — greatly underrated by others. In my judgment, while I have admitted his faults and follies and his incapability of doing others justice, I have not tried to make him chiefly conspicuous for those faults and follies.[6]

Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman, once Poe's fiancée, and a friend also of Elizabeth Oakes Smith's, had naturally more sympathy and admiration for the poet than had Neal. In an undated letter written in connection with an article on Poe by Mrs. Oakes Smith in the *United States Magazine* for March, 1857, Mrs. Whitman says:

If I were to give you my estimate of his character as I see it — of its inherent, essential attributes — you would inevitably think me visionary. It is said that all men have two natures — a higher and a lower — a divine and a demoniac sphere of life. It has been so painful for me to contemplate the lower sphere of *his* life that I have habitually turned away from it to look at the other nobler, more interior nature. . . . In this *I believe* and would fain ignore the rest. . . . Your estimate is a most kind and tolerant one. . . . I do not think, with you, that his manner gave the impression of habitual insincerity. On the contrary, he seemed to me — in his private character — simple, direct, and genuine beyond all persons that I have known. You will smile, I know — but this has been and is my earnest conviction. I believe too that in the artistic utterance of poetic emotion he was profoundly, passionately genuine — genuine in the expression of his utter desolation of soul — his tender remorseful regret for the departed — his love, his hate, his pride, his perversity, and his despair. He was, it is true, vindictive — revengeful — unscrupulous in the use of expedients to attain his ends, but never false and fair seeming from an inherent perfidy and hollowness of heart.

Later in a sketch of this correspondent appearing in *Baldwin's Monthly* for September, 1879, Mrs. Oakes Smith wrote with a delicate appreciation of Mrs. Whitman's friendship for Poe, which she understood as well perhaps as any of their contemporaries:

[6] In Library of M. H. S.

That Edgar Poe affectionately and most reverently regarded Sarah Helena Whitman, cannot be doubted. All his language to me indicated not only this, but even more — that his moral sense had been touched and elevated by this state of feeling. Poe was so profound a dreamer, and his egoism so intense, that his demands upon others were always very great. He never did and never could adjust himself to the world and its ways and its people. His pretty child-wife he idolized; but they would both have nearly starved had it not been for his mother-in-law, who looked after them as helpless children and not a little wayward. When Poe first became acquainted with Helena the pretty wife was gone, and he all afloat, poor, and troubled.

Mrs. Whitman, gentle-toned, cultured, living in a nun-like seclusion; a believer in what is known as spiritualism; in the world, and not of it; grave, and yet with a humorous pleasantry, such as Charles Lamb would have delighted in, could not but arrest and profoundly affect a mind like that of Poe's; and she did not fail to do so, and the two will be associated through all time.

That there was at first some talk of marriage, is well known; but the idea was laid aside from some cause or other, yet with no diminution of mutual regard. My idealism of both would have been shocked had they married. Neither was young, and Mrs. Whitman was the senior by several years; yet age never seemed to belong to either. Poe was almost boyish with the sense of youth; and Mrs. Whitman, up to the time of her death, at more than seventy, produced always the impression of youth.

In a letter to Mrs. Oakes Smith dated May 15, 1856, Mrs. Whitman spoke of meeting John G. Saxe. No one more unlike Poe could be imagined than this popular and humorous poet from Vermont, whose *Proud Miss McBride* appears in many anthologies:

I believe I have not yet thanked you [she writes] for making me acquainted with Mr. Saxe. He is wonderfully original and entertaining, and in his exhaustless conversational resources, reminds me of John Neal. He was most enthusiastic in his talk about Eva, and said that she was not only a sinless child but the most elegant and high-bred woman in the world.

Much of the correspondence between Mrs. Oakes Smith and Mrs. Whitman is in a playful vein. In an undated letter in sprightly verse, of which only a few lines need be given, the latter refers to the general demand for autographs and mock-seriously affirms her claims to distinction as a poet:

> "Say, though I never wrote a book,
> I occupy a cozy nook
> In Dr. Griswold's — That his name
> Endorses all my drafts on Fame, —[7]
> That, in his preface, hand in hand
> With you and Mrs. Brooks I stand;
> Three pensive caryatides,
> Supporting the emblazoned frieze
> Of his fair Pantheon — "

In May, 1855, Seba Smith and his family moved from Brooklyn to 46 Stuyvesant Street, New York. The sons, now grown to manhood, were at home intermittently when not occupied in business elsewhere. The employment of the second son Sidney in Hayti and his subsequent appointment there as consul for 1853 and 1854 may have accounted for the calls at the Smiths' home of Count Timines, prime minister to Soulouque, who was proclaimed emperor of Hayti in 1849. During his military rule, he several times invaded Santo Domingo, the eastern portion of the island, under Spanish control; and although England, France, and the United States frowned at these attempts to bring all the people of Hayti under one government, Soulouque sent his emissary to Washington, hoping to get the support of the United States in his procedures.[8] Count Timines, who was

[7] Mrs. Maria G. Brooks, author of *Zophiel,* who surpassed both Mrs. Whitman and Mrs. Oakes Smith in the emotional power and lyric beauty of her verse and had won her distinction in the thirties, was ranked, probably rightly, by Griswold as the foremost American woman poet of the time.

[8] Sir Spenser St. John, *Hayti or the Black Republic,* N. Y., 1889, pp. 92–101.

probably one of the nobility newly created by Soulouque since his election, which included princes, dukes, and numerous marquises, counts, and barons, was an intelligent negro, having been educated in England and France, where he had become accustomed to courteous and respectful treatment. In the United States, he told Mrs. Oakes Smith, he felt for the first time what it meant to be one of the colored race. Following the extravagant policy of his superior, Soulouque, he offered Mrs. Oakes Smith unlimited sums if she would espouse his cause. Although interested, she insisted that he should adhere to his earlier purpose and try to enlist the help of the government. His mission to Washington, however, ended in failure.

In the Stuyvesant Street house, a three story red brick building still standing not far from St. Mark's Church, Mrs. Oakes Smith did much entertaining and included among her literary guests several other foreign patriots who had visited this country for help or who, because of political troubles in their own land, were living as exiles.[9] Among these were the Italian refugees Maroncelli and Foresti, and the Cuban General Goicouria. Maroncelli taught music in the city and had sufficient poetic ability to be included by Poe in his *Literati of New York;* his close friend and fellow-prisoner in Italy, Silvio Pellico, was a poet of some distinction. Foresti, well known to Tuckerman, Hoffman, and other frequenters of Miss Lynch's drawing rooms in the forties, suffered seventeen years' imprisonment in his own country before he came to America in 1836. After teaching Italian for a number of years at Columbia College, he went back to Italy in 1858 as United States Consul. A pioneer in the movement for the independence of Cuba and a gentleman of wealth, General Goicouria took an active part in the Lopez

[9] *Selections from the Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith,* Chap. X.

expeditions and after that leader's death escaped with difficulty to this country.[10] He was bitterly opposed to slavery and must have won respectful attention in Mrs. Oakes Smith's rooms, where the pleasantries of gay and genial intercourse could not stifle apprehension of the dangers threatening our Union.

> Conversation, Mrs. Oakes Smith writes in her autobiography as she speaks of these gatherings, was certainly more of a fine art in those days than it now is, and wit, humor, and enthusiasm won a respectful and appreciative response. Society was smouldering over the existence of Slavery at the South and there was now and then a scintillating gleam of the national passionateness, that culminated in the great Civil War. People everywhere, even in social circles, were intensely earnest. I was talking in my rooms upon Woman Suffrage, and I think did not quite relish much of the light badinage that came to the surface by the wits of the period. . . .[11]
>
> Italians, Spaniards, Cubans were amongst our guests, and in an unheroic period filled the imagination of my household with heroic ideas — with admiration for men and women who could turn their backs upon ease and frivolity, and give place to earnest, self-sacrificing endeavor.[12]

The agitation of such topics in the Smith household and the frequent presence of these patriots may have influenced Appleton and Alvin in 1855 and 1856 to join General Walker's expedition to Nicaragua. Associated with them was John Neal's son James, who died of yellow fever in Granada during the summer of 1856. Both John Neal and Elizabeth Oakes Smith were at first, like many others, in favor of General Walker's attempts to establish an independent government in Nicaragua. But when he restored slavery and enacted other arbitrary measures under the pre-

[10] General Goicouria was executed in Havana in 1870. W. F. Johnson, *History of Cuba,* N. Y., 1920, Vol. III, p. 234.

[11] *Selections from the Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith,* p. 88.

[12] Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith in MS., p. 464.

tense of the support of the United States Government, public spirit turned against him. "I congratulate you," John Neal wrote Mrs. Oakes Smith in a letter of September 3, 1856, "on the hand your sons have in the regeneration of Nicaragua, and look with deep interest at the progress of General Walker."[13] Mrs. Oakes Smith was subsequently disillusioned, as she showed in a sketch of John Neal, included in her autobiography:

> A son of Neal's perished in Nicaragua [she writes], whither he had gone, as did hundreds of others, in the belief that that arch deceiver, Walker, was a true man, intent to extend the privileges and amenities of a higher culture in a land of anarchy and misrule.[14]

During Elizabeth Oakes Smith's career as a lecturer she was recognized by the most discerning minds as a woman with a vision. In her restlessness at finding actual life so different from her ideals, she turned to religion for peace and comfort toward the end of her lyceum activity and considered entering the Roman Catholic Church. Up to this time her religious convictions had been mainly induced by her reason. Puritan theology she had questioned as a child, and had gradually drifted into Unitarianism. Now it was not the creed of Catholicism which influenced her but her admiration for professors of that faith. "I do not wonder," she writes in her autobiography, "the Roman Catholic Church has its hold upon the human heart, so tenderly does it, in its best aspect, respond to human sympathies."[15] She found its highest ideals embodied in the sisters of charity in New York City, who became her friends and confidantes, and in Adrian Roquette, a Jesuit poet and missionary who wrote

[13] In Library of M. H. S.

[14] Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith in MS., p. 407.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 583.

her in appreciation of her poetry, and who impressed her profoundly by his unworldly life. Her son Edward had earlier embraced the Catholic faith and had introduced her to members of the church, among whom Bishop O'Reilly of New York influenced her more than anyone else to accept Catholicism. Almost persuaded by the earnestness of his argument, she writes that " for days she read and was comforted by Thomas A. Kempis, which had been for twenty years her daily companion."

> Faithful and true [she continues] was my friend Dr. Ripley, as I sought rest by drawing near to these dangerous waters. His beloved wife had passed a similar ordeal — had joined herself in all her saintly loveliness to this Church, and never had it caused a discordant note between the true wife and husband; far less would he raise a dissenting note in the relation of a friend. Mr. Ripley had a profound reverence for the sanctities of the soul — its intuitions, its intimations; . . . and like a true gentleman as he was, and a christian in his acceptance of truth to another mind, he never gainsaid it.[16]

Mrs. Oakes Smith's religious quandries did not end in the acceptance of the Catholic faith, but in a state of mental depression, brought on probably in large measure by the overtaxing of her energies during her career as a public speaker. As her poor health continued, it seemed wise for the family to leave the noisy traffic of the city for more peaceful surroundings.

In the spring of 1860 Seba Smith bought an old colonial residence in Patchogue, a little village on the coast of Long Island. As the last edition of his Downing letters had been published by his son Appleton a year earlier — in March, 1859 — this was probably a favorable time to invest in a permanent home, although no record of the sales profit from the book has been left. The bay at Patchogue has been com-

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 597.

pared in beauty to Portland Harbor, and if the Smiths saw such a resemblance, it may have been one inducement to settle there. The quiet charm of country life brought joy both to Seba Smith and to his wife after the congestion of the city, and Mrs. Oakes Smith gradually regained her serenity of mind. Their home, which they called the Willows, was a stately dwelling place situated some distance inland on the main thoroughfare of the town.

In her diary for October 12, 1860, Mrs. Oakes Smith describes their living room at the Willows "with the fire blazing cheerily — the glow lighting up the long rows of books and seeming to cause a new vivid expression to Goethe and Schiller as they stand upon their pedestals fronting the light." On the walls of this room hung a copy of Bryant's *Thanatopsis* in his own handwriting, a gift from the poet to Seba Smith and Elizabeth Oakes Smith, whom he called the Howitts of America.

They had many reminders of their work and associates in New York. In this same entry of her journal Mrs. Oakes Smith writes of looking over old letters and recalling past experiences. One interesting occasion was an afternoon's jaunt with Mrs. Hildreth and her husband, the historian. The latter was at that time suffering from melancholia. In describing their walk, Mrs. Oakes Smith writes:

> An Aeronaut rose from the city causing much commotion among crowds. Mr. Hildreth was little interested; his countenance retained its glum expression, which would have been very provoking had it not been most pitiful in a man of fine taste and genius. At length the balloon passed nearly over our track — he had just before barely escaped being run over by a carriage, for I seized his arm and drew him back in time to escape the peril, expressing my astonishment and indignation in plain terms. "You will be killed," I said.
>
> "Well, I wish I could be. I am tired of life," he replied.
>
> "Come then, hurry along — they will be throwing out ballast

from the balloon presently," I said, "and may accommodate you with a stone."

"The oddness of the idea, and the coolness with which I yielded to his humor produced a revulsion, and he burst into a laugh and became quite cheerful for several hours.

This incident suggests the magnetic power and strength of spirit characteristic of Mrs. Oakes Smith. In her diary for August 2, 1861, she mentions a brief visit from Mr. Hildreth, who was then entirely recovered from his depression and appointed as consul to Trieste, whither her son Edward was to accompany him. George Ripley, who had given her book *Bertha and Lily* high praise in 1854, found inspiration in continued friendship with her, and after the greatest sorrow of his life, the death of Mrs. Ripley, in 1861, it was with the help of her wise counsel that he gradually returned to a normal interest in living. Ripley was among the first of the Smiths' literary associates in New York to call upon them in Patchogue. Later their guests came in numbers for such parties as they had often held in their home on Stuyvesant Street; and on several occasions the Willows was brightly illuminated to welcome a company of artist and author friends from the city.

It was at the outset of the Civil War, when all minds and hearts were preoccupied, that the Smiths established themselves in Patchogue. Because of this situation and because of Seba Smith's growing deafness, which embarrassed him if he tried to make new acquaintances, their life was at first somewhat apart from that of the community. Sidney and Appleton had married in the fifties and at the Willows there were usually various grandchildren to whose instruction and amusement their grandparents devoted much attention. During the early sixties, however, Sidney's family were with him for a part of the time in Cuba, where he was engaged in business; and a letter from Seba Smith to Alvin in 1861 indi-

cates that the latter was occupied with work in Buenos Aires. In her diary for the winter of 1861 Mrs. Oakes Smith reproaches herself that "ill health and family cares make it impossible for her to do anything with her pen in such perilous times." "Reports of every day," she writes, "fill me with alarm for our beloved Union."

During these months one son, probably Appleton, ran for a time a mill adjoining the Willows to manufacture cotton twine; and in a letter of March 4, 1861, to Horatio King,[17] Postmaster General, Seba Smith tried to make a contract to supply the government with that article. It seems, however, that nothing ever came of this effort to add to the family exchequer. Mrs. Oakes Smith writes in her diary of resorting to their former practice of taking boarders to supplement their income; but as time went on she was able to make occasional lecture engagements both in town and elsewhere, and to continue her writing.

Meanwhile the young men in Patchogue were enlisting for the War and marching to the front. The villagers were thrifty and industrious people occupied on their farms, or in the cotton mill, or engaged in the fishing and oyster business. The patriotism with which they answered their country's call roused Mrs. Oakes Smith's enthusiasm; and on one occasion, probably at some sacrifice on her part, she presented each one of a group of departing soldiers with a rubber army blanket. Only one of her sons seems to have been in a position to enlist. This was Edward, a youth of the most idealistic tendencies, who must have recoiled from the horrors of war. He was to travel with Mr. Hildreth, United States Consul to Austria, the summer of 1861; but during the war he had six months' service in the army and later

[17] Horatio King, native of Paris, Maine, had been in the postal service in Washington since 1839, and was appointed Postmaster General by Franklin Pierce in 1854.

joined his brother Sidney in Cuba, where he died of the yellow fever in the summer of 1865.

Twenty-five years had passed without a break in the Smiths' family circle, and the loss of her son Edward, for whom Mrs. Oakes Smith had the tenderest sympathies, was a shock from which she could not easily recover. During the fall of 1864 she had been engaged in lecturing in New York and Worcester, and in the winter of 1865 had started a lyceum for boys and girls in the basement of the Congregational Church in Patchogue, where she recited poems, emphasized correct pronunciation, and helped the young people to an appreciation of literature. In 1865 and 1866 after Edward's death her activities seem to have been limited, for the most part, to what were possible to carry on in her own household. Seba Smith was gradually growing infirm and so deaf as to be almost excluded from conversation; but he still kept up correspondence with many old friends. Mrs. Oakes Smith was busily occupied with her writing.

In the early sixties she had written two of the novels published by Beadle and Adams in their paper-covered series: *The Sagamore of Saco* and *Black Hollow*. During the year 1867 her name appeared regularly in *Beadle's Monthly* with articles which are largely reminiscences of famous contemporaries. These are among the most valuable of her shorter writings, and are mainly included in her autobiography, begun in April, 1866, and essentially a contribution to the history of American letters. An article on Poe of some ten pages in length embodies most of the material given in *Emerson's Magazine;* but a letter from Mrs. Whitman on Mrs. Oakes Smith's critique in this periodical is added, and also many data on the early life of Poe.[18]

Of other papers — on Willis,[19] Fanny Kemble,[20] and Rufus

[18] Date, Feb., 1867, reprinted in *The Home Journal,* Mar. 15, 1876.
[19] Mar. 1867. [20] *Ibid.*

Griswold — the last perhaps is the most enlightening. His child-like, whimsical nature combined with his earnestness and scholarly efforts in behalf of American letters are brought out vividly; and Mrs. Oakes Smith has shown discerning judgment in her estimate of his place in American literature:

> Under the appearance of almost indolent ease [she writes] he covered untiring, indefatigable industry; and this matter-of-fact industry conflicting with the intimations of his own genius, gave him that half-humorous, half-pathetic cast of mind and character, which rendered him attractive to the friends who best knew him. He did not suggest idealism, as Poe and Hoffman always did, but something quaint, half-mischievous instead; but start the subject of an American author, and he smelt the battle afar off like the war-horse, and all his humors and apparent contradictions vanished; he was at once in earnest; he grew eloquent, dogmatized, and bore down all opposition.[21]

According to Mrs. Oakes Smith, he intended "to write an elaborate work upon American writers of fiction giving the tendency of this kind of literature, its effect on the popular mind, and the intrinsic claims of this class of writers to literary rank." It is to be regretted that this purpose was not carried out, as the completion of such a study would have been a valuable addition to his collections from contemporary writers.

In the fall of 1867 Seba Smith's health had failed utterly, and he suffered a lingering illness for eight months, until his death, July 28, 1868. He lived to see the once popular Major Jack Downing almost completely forgotten. Scarcely a reference to the death of his originator in 1868 can be found in the current newspapers. In writing to the *Editors' Literary Leaves Syndicate* several years later in reference to her husband, Mrs. Oakes Smith said:

[21] *Beadle's Monthly,* Vol. III, pp. 438–439. (May, 1867.)

There is really hardly a stone to his memory, except what was designed to be only a marking place where rest the ashes of a good and gifted man.[22]

The Willows was sold soon after Seba Smith's death, and Mrs. Oakes Smith went to live for a time with her son Alvin's family at Blue Point, a few miles from Patchogue. So far as was possible she kept up active connections with her literary friends in New York. In March, 1868, she had become a charter member of the first woman's club to be organized in America, the Sorosis Club of New York, whose object was to "further educational and social activities of women and to bring together for mutual helpfulness representative women in art, literature, science, and kindred pursuits." Alice Carey was the first president and Mrs. Botta (formerly Miss Anne Charlotte Lynch) and Mrs. Horace Greeley were two other charter members; Elizabeth Oakes Smith was vice-president in 1869. During this same winter she was saddened by the loss of her second son, Sidney, at sea. He had taken passage for Hayti in December on a ship which never reached its destination, and it was supposed that all on board perished. This situation was the more distressing to his mother and family as he was just beginning to realize his ambitions, having received his degree in 1867 at the Columbia School of Law.

Mrs. Oakes Smith's own records yield little for the years from 1870 until 1873, when she began to write for *Appleton's Journal.* She continued sending poems and prose articles during the seventies to *The Home Journal, Potter's American Monthly,* and to *The Herald of Health,* a little paper published in New York. From 1874 until 1885 her work appeared with some frequency in *Baldwin's Monthly,* which she says in her autobiography "was conducted in a fine manly way by Mr. Baldwin, who paid reasonable prices

[22] Undated.

for his articles." [23] Among her writings were sketches of her contemporaries Mrs. Sarah J. Hale,[24] the poet Mrs. Eames,[25] Mrs. Schoolcraft,[26] of Indian descent, who contributed much to her husband's research in Indian lore, John Neal,[27] N. P. Willis,[28] and Bryant. The last, for September, 1878, was perhaps the most pleasing of all. Her description of Bryant indicates the kindliness and companionable spirit of one whose personality has generally been regarded as austere and unapproachable.

> "How is it you always talk with Bryant?" Mrs. Ellet once said to me. "I never can get a word out of him."
>
> This was a complaint often made in general society; but to me he always seemed the most genial and companionable of men. He was playful and cordial, but one could see, exceedingly fastidious; a contemner of all shams, pretenses, and affectations of every kind. I remember once he met me with a boyish gayety. He was hurrying to look after some baggage by the Long Island Railway, which at that time passed through the tunnel under Atlantic Street, Brooklyn. Shaking me warmly by the hand, he cried: "Go shake hands with Granny Bryant — she's Granny Bryant now." And the wifely woman told me of the motherdom of her daughter Fannie, with almost the zest of her husband.

Letters written Mrs. Oakes Smith during this period by D. C. Colesworthy,[29] an old Portland friend and editor, refer in an entertaining fashion to their literary acquaintances. He was then a book dealer in Boston, and wrote of visits from Emerson and Longfellow, who mentioned Mrs. Oakes

[23] Autobiography in MS., p. 513.

[24] *Ibid.*, July, 1879.

[25] *Ibid.*, Apr., 1876.

[26] *Ibid.*, Mar., 1874.

[27] *Ibid.*, Aug., 1881.

[28] *Ibid.*, Mar., 1878.

[29] In Boston, 1876, his long poem *School is Out* was published; this had some favorable comment at the time. Letters in Library of M. H. S.

Smith's ability as a lecturer and poet. Her activities had brought her into contact with Bryant, and Mr. Colesworthy noted with wistful interest her personal glimpses of the poet whom he most admired.

In 1877 she carried out a long cherished plan in being for a time pastor of an Independent Congregation in Canastota, New York. So far as any records point out she seems to have been there from April, 1877, until December of the same year. A letter from Reverend O. B. Frothingham on December 26 would indicate that she was looking for a new parish; yet the feeling for her there was still warm. Her diary for this period refers to long walks and drives and the enjoyment of pastoral work. She made friends whose zeal for literature and increased knowledge was kindled by her own abilities, and she writes of being absorbed in reading the life of Harriet Martineau. Her sermons were, for the most part, on conventional subjects such as *Worship, Faith,* and *The Growth of Religion in the Soul;* but she did not treat them in a conventional way, nor did she fail to bring to the pulpit her well-worn theme, *Womanhood.*

Mrs. Oakes Smith never allowed her public work to prevent her from continuing literary friendships by correspondence; among her letters received from 1876 to 1879 are a number signed by names well known in American letters. Her acquaintance with Longfellow dated back to her school days in Portland, and he had several times showed an interest in her writing; now in a letter of December 23, 1876, he apologized pleasantly for his delayed reply to her regarding some poems mailed him which he had been unable to use:

> But I trust you will pardon me [he adds], when I tell you how ill and suffering I have been, and still am, from an attack of neuralgia which is painful and persistent and almost incapacitated me from reading and writing. If you do not, I shall think you inexorable.

Had Mrs. Oakes Smith become saddened at the thought that her days of greatest usefulness were past, as she intimated in a letter to Bryant, his reply of November 26, 1877, when she was discharging her duties as pastor at Canastota to the best of her abilities, must have brought her cheer:

If you have in fact passed into the class of the antiquated [he writes], which I by no means admit, it must be into that class to which the sun and stars belong, whose useful brightness never grows dim. I am glad to learn that you are doing good, and hope that you may long be spared to that purpose.

A letter from George Ripley on November 15, 1878, shows that she was as eager as ever to keep in touch with the latest literary news:

I send you by mail [he says] a copy of Frothingham's transcendentalism, E. C. Stedman's sketch of O. B. Frothingham, and a little notice of Carlyle from yesterday's *Tribune* in which moss-grown pulpit I still hold forth as stated preacher of the latest literary example.

Paul Hamilton Hayne, the Southern poet, wrote her from Augusta, Georgia, February 10, 1879, thanking her for the encouragement she had given him, saying, "You have won Mrs. Hayne's heart by your appreciation, as she expresses it, of her husband." In another letter of February 26, 1879, he wrote of the recognition which his poem *The Stricken South to the North,* had brought him, referred to her friendship with Poe, and ended with bitter reflections on conditions in the South during the Reconstruction period:

I regret to observe, as you do, that a "good deal of the old hostility to the South is reviving," but you'll be glad to learn that *The Stricken South to the North,* has called forth many letters of warmest appreciative sympathy: (for instance) from Mr. Longfellow, Whittier, Gen. McClellan, and other distinguished Northmen, together with an exceedingly kind communication from our

minister to England, the Hon. John Welsh — he (Mr. W.) courteously mailed nos. of the London "Anglo American" in which the verses had been republished. . . .

By the way, a strange mysterious feeling comes over me when I think that I am writing to one who was so closely acquainted with Edgar Poe, who had often doubtless conversed with him upon topics of immortal moment, had listened to that wonderful eloquence which has been described as "supra mortal"! ! . . . Have you any slight relic of him you could spare me? a scrap of his writing, his autograph — anything?

Once I owned a considerable quantity of his Mss — pages from *Marginalia*, and his critique on Mrs. Osgood — ; given me by the late John R. Thompson of Richmond — but when the civilized Tecumseh passed on his way thro Columbia S. C. in 1865, these invaluable Mss, with many other souvenirs and relics not to be replaced, perished in the fire which destroyed the Bank — . . . .

And as for our poor South, she has lost, or is fast losing her ancient virtue, courtesy, sensitive honor, chivalric consideration, and in their place, what do we see? —

Sordid grasping after riches, Yankee keenness, and a low order of manners, and I fear morals also! Then the subserviency which is frequently displayed by men in high places! I am sick of it.

Mrs. Oakes Smith could understand to some degree the poet's attitude, for after leaving Canastota she had made her home with her eldest son in Hollywood, North Carolina, summering occasionally with Alvin's family at Blue Point, Long Island. Appleton had settled in Hollywood, on Roanoke Sound, in 1873, and was for a time a member of the state legislature. After his death, in 1887, his mother was cared for by his wife and children.

During her residence in the South, Elizabeth Oakes Smith's interest in the movement for equal suffrage was ever keen. In July, 1878, she attended the thirtieth anniversary of the first Woman's Rights Convention in Rochester, New York, as delegate from North Carolina. In January, 1879, she was sent as a speaker from this state to the Eleventh Convention of Woman Suffragists at Washington. There she

gave a paper on *Biology and Woman's Rights*, arguing that mothers of the race should have advantages for development equal to those of their partners in marriage, and was made chairman of a committee "to wait upon" the President. Yet as a Mormon woman was on the committee, she refused to act, for she said she was unwilling to "mix up the question with polygamy,"[30] not realizing, perhaps, that the indoctrination of her views might have helped to discontinue such a practice. Short-sightedness, however, was not characteristic of Mrs. Oakes Smith. In a letter to the Boston *Index* of August 27, 1885, she wrote with acumen of women's situation in the South:

> Women of the North can have little conception of the hindrances which their sisters of the South encounter in their efforts to accept new and progressive ideas. The other sex, in a blind sort of way, hold fast to an absolute kind of chivalry akin to that of the renowned Don Quixote, by which they try to hold women in the background, as a kind of porcelain liable to crack and breakage, unless daintily handled. Women here see the spirit of the age and the need of change far more clearly than the men, and act up to this light, but with a flexible grace that disarms opposition. They see the necessity of work, and are turning their attention to methods for remunerative labor, far more difficult to obtain at the South than at the North.

In the summer of 1884 Mrs. Oakes Smith's philanthropic interests had been quickened by a visit with a friend, Miss Sally Holley, at her negro mission in Scottsburgh, Virginia.[31] She wrote an account of this experience, detailing not only the needs of the colored race, but the economic condition of Southern women, as she observed them in Virginia, left pen-

[30] Mrs. Oakes Smith's Journal, Jan., 1879.

[31] Daughter of Myron Holley, a pioneer abolitionist. Among her friends in New York were Mrs. Campbell and Mrs. E. P. Miller, who were also friends of Mrs. Oakes Smith and helped arrange lecture engagements for her in her last years.

niless in their neglected mansions, and sent it to the *Portland Transcript,* Maine. Her stories, letters, and poems were published regularly in this paper during the eighties, and from time to time in *The Phrenological Journal,* in *The Herald of Health,* and in *The Home Journal.*

Although she had outlived most of her old literary friends in New York, she still went back occasionally and lectured to one hundred or more cultured listeners, who could be accommodated in private parlors of Brooklyn or New York. It would seem that her advancing years had brought her all the charm and dignity of age rather than its ravages; for people who knew her in those days were attracted by her stately grace and beauty. Since 1882 she had prepared one of her most enjoyable lectures — an intimate picture of Emerson and his circle as she learned to know them during her stay at Concord in 1851. In the winter of 1884 Mrs. Helen Campbell, a literary friend in Brooklyn, wrote to her at Hollywood to arrange for this lecture to be given in her drawing rooms, and guaranteed thirty dollars in return. This amount today would not pay travelling expenses between North Carolina and New York, and it is doubtful if in the eighties she could have made profit on one such engagement. But apparently she planned for several of these parlor talks when she took the journey to the city. In February of this same year she lectured at the home of Dr. E. P. Miller in West 26th Street, New York, on the subject of marriage, and was heard with frequent applause. She was introduced by Edward W. Bok, at this time a promising young reporter who, as a summer visitor at Blue Point, Long Island, had made her acquaintance and listened with delight to her reminiscences of an earlier literary era.[32]

During the last six or seven years of her life Mrs. Oakes

[32] Undated clipping in scrap book of W. J. Bok.

Smith never wandered far from her retreat in Hollywood. Here she resumed work on her autobiography, which she had started some twenty years earlier. An occasional sonnet from her pen found its way to *The Home Journal*, and on March 16, 1890, she sent one with a note accompanying it in which she spoke of her good health, her daily rides or walks, the birds tapping at her window for food, and her reading of the Bible, Milton, and Shakespeare. She died, after a short illness, on November 20, 1893, and was buried in Patchogue.

In the late fall of 1893 much more appeared in the press regarding the life and work of Mrs. Oakes Smith than had been written of Seba Smith at his death twenty-five years earlier; but undue importance should not be attached to this circumstance. During the turmoil following the Civil War, people were too deeply engrossed in public affairs to turn in retrospect to the career of a writer who had outlived his popularity. The last decade of the nineteenth century was a more self-conscious period, when the records of the past were considered of significance in explaining contemporary works. Major Jack Downing was again recalled to the public in the obituaries of Mrs. Oakes Smith, and since then there have been several tributes to his memory.[33] Certainly, a writer whose native ingenuity has enabled him to discover a new way, deserves some little honor, particularly when such canny humorists as Sam Slick, Artemus Ward, Hosea Biglow, and Mr. Dooley have followed his lead. More than this, Jack Downing's humor, though directed mainly at

[33] In Edward Payson Evans, *Beitrage zur amerikanischen Litteratur — und Kultur Geschichte,* Stuttgart, 1898, Major Jack Downing (Seba Smith) is mentioned as a "pathbreaker" in the field of American humor. The last tribute of any length, printed in *The Pine Tree Magazine* of Maine for August, 1906, is the work of Professor Koopman, Librarian of Brown University, who shows appreciative and discerning judgment of Smith's satirical writing.

the political situation of his own period, brings the laugh today even as in his own time.

While acknowledging that the Downing letters have had a wider influence in American literature than anything ever written by Mrs. Oakes Smith, one must remember that in her own day, as a writer, reformer, and lecturer of distinction, she was far better known in literary and intellectual circles throughout the country than her husband, Seba Smith. Her importance in the history of the woman's rights movement should not be overlooked; but it is perhaps of greater moment that in freedom of thought and courageous undertakings she came near exemplifying herself the ideal toward which she was striving, the emancipated woman. That in spite of the prejudices against women's public activity, more general in her day than now, she retained the respect and admiration of the most eminent thinkers of her generation, is also greatly to her credit. Her acquaintance and association with the greatest contemporary writers, of whom she has given delightful personal glimpses in her autobiography, entitles her to a permanent place in the history of American letters.

It is as pioneer figures, however, that both Seba Smith and Elizabeth Oakes Smith assume most significance; and in their connections with important people and movements of their day, they open up an interesting chapter of a period that has passed.

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A Girl's Life Eighty Years Ago — Selections from the Letters of Eliza Southgate Bowne (Introduction by Clarence Cook), London, 1888.

History of Portland, 1632–1864, William Willis, Portland, 1865.

Portland Illustrated, John Neal, Portland, 1874.

Portland and Vicinity, Edward Elwell, Portland, revised edition, 1881.

Portland in the Past, William Goold, Portland, 1886.

History of Maine, J. C. Abbott, revised by E. Elwell, Augusta, Me., 1892.

Bibliography of State of Maine from the Earliest Period to 1891, J. Williamson, Portland, 1896, 2 vols.

Maine, A History, Centennial Edition, L. C. Hatch, Editor-in-chief, N. Y., 1919, American Historical Society.

The Maine Book, Henry Dunnack, Augusta, Me., 1920.

II. Papers in which Downing Letters Originally Appeared

A. Smith

Portland Courier, Portland, Me., letters of Jan. 18, 1830–Mar. 22, 1836.

Downing Gazette, Portland, Me., letters of July 4, 1834–Mar. 22, 1836.
Family Reader, Portland, Me., Jan. 26, 1830–Apr. 1, 1836.
The Rover, N. Y., Jan. 19, 1844–Jan. 11, 1845.
Bunker Hill, N. Y., letters of July 26, 1844–Dec. 9, 1844.
National Intelligencer, Washington, D. C., July 2, 1847–Jan. 26, 1856.

B. Davis

New York Daily Advertiser, June 27, 1833–Mar. 13, 1835.

C. Brooks or Davis

New York Daily Express, Aug. 16, 1837–Apr. 4, 1839.

D. Civil War Series

New York Weekly Caucasian, Feb. 8, 1862–Feb., 1864.

III. Other Newspapers in which Downing Letters were Circulated

(Smith*; Davis#; other spurious letters.° Available newspapers for this period have been searched in the libraries of Hallowell and Portland, Me., and of Boston, Worcester, New York, Washington, Detroit, Chicago, and Cincinnati; but it is unlikely that these listed represent more than a small proportion of the papers in which the letters were published.)

1830

*Boston Daily Advertiser,** Jan. 21, 27, Feb. 3, 15, 16, 20, 27.
*Boston Patriot and Mercantile Advertiser,** Feb. 15.
*Daily Evening Transcript,** Boston, Oct. 26.
*New Bedford Mercury,** Mass., Feb. 19.

1831

*Daily Evening Transcript,** Boston, June 8.
*Independent Chronicle and Boston Patriot,** Aug. 20.

1832

*Maine Daily Journal,** Augusta, Me., Jan. 11, 26, 30, Feb. 4.
*Maine Recorder,** Limington, Me., June 8.

1833

The Albany Journal, N. Y., July 16,# Aug. 23,* Sept. 20,# Oct. 1,° 15,* Dec. 6,# 24.#

*American Mercury,** Hartford, Conn., Jan. 21.

*American Traveller,** Boston, Oct. 11.

*Boston Patriot and Daily Mercantile Advertiser,** June 26.

Boston Weekly Messenger,# Dec. 19.

The Cincinnati Daily Gazette, July 9,# 10,° 12,# ° 14,° * 16,° 19,° Aug. 12,° 20,# 29,° Nov. 26,# Dec. 14.#

*Cincinnati Mirror and Ladies' Parterre,** Aug. 17.

Connecticut Courant, Hartford, Feb. 5,* July 8,# 15,* ° 22,# ° Aug. 12,* # 23,# Nov. 4,# Dec. 16.#

Daily Evening Transcript,° Boston, June 11, 28.

Daily Louisville Herald, Kentucky, June 18,° 29,* July 2,* 8,° Aug. 26,# Sept. 14,° Oct. 8,# 9,# 24. #

Daily National Intelligencer, Washington, D. C., May 25,* July 16.*

Detroit Courier, July 17,° 24,° Oct. 2.#

Detroit Journal and Michigan Advertiser, Aug. 28,° Sept. 25,# Oct. 2,° Dec. 25.#

Dover Enquirer, N. H., June 25,* July 16,* Sept. 3,# 17,° Nov. 6.#

Essex Register, Salem, Mass., Oct. 7,# 10,* ° June 20,* July 1,° 8,° 11,# 15,° * 18,# Aug. 22,° Sept. 16,# 22,# 23.#

Evening Star,# N. Y., Sept. 30.

Evening Chronicle, Amesbury, Mass., June 20,* 27.°

Evening Gazette, Boston, June 29,* July 6.°

Family Pioneer and Juvenile Key, Brunswick, Me., Aug. 31,° Sept. 21.°

Independent Chronicle and Boston Patriot, Jan. 30,* July 6,° 13,* Sept. 11,# 25,# Oct. 2,* # 30,# * Nov. 13,# Dec. 18.#

Litchfield Enquirer, Conn., July 11,° 25,° Aug. 8 # (continued).

*Maine Free Press,** Hallowell, Me., Feb. 8, 22.

Morning Courier and New York Enquirer,° Oct. 12.

*The National Gazette,** Phila., June 25.

New York Advertiser,# June 25.

New York American, May 1,# Aug. 8,# 19,# Sept. 9,# Oct. 18,* 25,# 30,# Nov. 7.#

The New York Spectator, Oct. 3,# 17,# * Dec. 4.#

*The United States Gazette,** Phila., Mar. 6.

United States Telegraph, Washington, D. C., June 21,* July 1,# 8,° 9,# Aug. 2,* 6.#

1834

The Cincinnati Daily Gazette,# Jan. 10, 16, 20, Feb. 4, Mar. 10, 22, Apr. 18.
Detroit Journal and Michigan Advertiser, Jan. 15,# 22,# 29,° Feb. 5,° 12,° 19,° Mar. 12,# June 11,# Dec. 24.#
Dover Enquirer,# N. H., Feb. 4, Mar. 25.
Georgia Journal,# Millidgeville, Feb. 12.
Maine Daily Journal,# Augusta, Me., Jan. 15.
Major Downing's Advocate and Mechanics Journal,# N. Y., July 9, 17, Aug. 13, Oct. 16.
Western Intelligencer,# Milan, Ohio, June 3.

1835

*The Cincinnati Daily Gazette,** May 9, 15.
The Commonwealth, Frankfort, Ky., Dec. 12,* May 2.# * *
Detroit Journal and Michigan Advertiser,# Apr. 15.
*Liberty Hall and Cincinnati Gazette,** Dec. 5, 10.

IV. Collections of Downing Letters by Smith and Davis

A. Smith

The Life and Writings of Major Jack Downing of Downingville, Away Down East in the State of Maine, Written by Himself, Lilly Wait, and Co., Boston, 1833, 2nd ed., 1834, 8 eds. in all.
May-Day in New York, Burgess, Stringer, and Co., 1845. Same vol. under title *Jack Downing's Letters by Major Jack Downing,* Phila., 1845.
My Thirty Years Out of the Senate, Oaksmith and Co., N. Y., 1859.
John Smith's Letters with Picters to Match (slight variation from Downing letters), Samuel Colman, N. Y., 1839.

B. Davis

Letters of J. Downing, Major, Downingville Militia, Second Brigade, to his old friend Mr. Dwight of the N. Y. Daily Ad-

vertiser, Harper and Brothers, N. Y., 1834 (ten editions by 1836).

Letters of Major Downing (Same volume as above), Murray, London, 1835, 2nd edition.

V. Spurious Collections and Pirated Editions of Downing Letters

Letters Written During the President's Tour "Down East"; by Myself, Major Jack Downing of Downingville, J. A. James, Cincinnati, 1833, 2nd ed., U. P. James, 1838 (pirated, Smith, Davis, and imitations).

The Select Letters of Major Jack Downing of the Downingville Militia, Away Down East in the State of Maine, Written by Himself, Withington and Davis, Phila., 1834 (pirated, Smith, Davis, and spurious letters in appendix of Smith's volume).

The Life of Andrew Jackson by Major Jack Downing, T. K. Greenbank, Phila., 1834.

Jack Downing's Song Book, by Jack Downing, M. D. M., Providence 1836, 4 eds. by 1839.

The Letters of Major Jack Downing of the Downingville Militia, Bromley and Co., N. Y., 1864. 3rd ed. Van Evrie, Horton and Co., N. Y., 1866.

Major Jack Downing to Lincoln, S. O. Beaton's books, London, Frederick Warne and Co., 1865 (same as preceding volume).

VI. Contributions of the Smiths to Four Magazines

A. *The Ladies' Companion*

1. Elizabeth Oakes Smith

1839. Sketches: *Elderly Gentlemen,* May; *Angling,* June and July; *Funeral of Moth,* Nov.
Poetry: *Flower of Innocence,* June; *Birth of the Calla,* Aug.; *The Old Dispute of the Katydids,* Oct.; *The First Statuist,* Dec.

1840. Sketches: *Dame Hans,* Jan.; *Aunt Ruth,* March; *Indian Traits,* July; *Joe Lowell,* Sept.; *The Dying Boy,* Nov.
Poetry: *Night,* April; *Apology for Cultivating Flowers,* Dec.

1841. Sketch: *Zeke Dyer,* May.
1842. Sketch: *Uncle Zeke and one of his yarns,* March.
Poetry: *To the Hudson,* Jan.; *To the Memory of Lucy Hooper,* May; *Lights and Shadows,* Aug.; *The Poet,* Oct.

2. Seba Smith

1839. Poetry: *Address to a Friend in Iowa,* Sept.
1840. Poetry: *Lovewell's Fight,* Aug.
1842. Serial: *Ups and Downs of Lot Wyman,* Oct., Nov., Dec.
1843. Serial: *Ups and Downs of Lot Wyman,* Jan., Feb., March, April.
Tale: *Seating the Parish,* May.
Poetry: *What Is Wealth?* June.

B. *Godey's Lady's Book*

1. Elizabeth Oakes Smith

1840. Story: *The Opal Ring,* Jan., Feb.
1841. Story: *Gems and Reptiles,* Feb.
Poetry: *Childhood's Laugh,* Jan.
1842. Sketches: *Leaves by the Wayside,* Aug., Sept.
Poetry: *To a Babe,* Oct.; *The Child and the Rose,* Dec.
1843. Stories and Sketches: *The Lunacy of Fanny Parr,* Jan.; *The Unrequited,* May; *The Proud Ladye,* July; *The Village School,* July; *The Milk Bill,* Aug.
Poetry: *To the Park Fountain,* May; *Stanzas to* ——, June; *Twilight,* Oct.; *Stanzas,* Nov.
1844. Sketch: *Not Sure About That Same,* July.
1845. Story: *The Intercepted Letter,* April.
Poetry: *The Last Guest,* July; *Error,* Aug.
1846. Poetry: *Sonnet,* Jan.; *The Poet,* Feb.; *An Autumn Thought,* March; *Song of Goethe's Margaret,* May.
1847. Poetry: *Midnight,* Jan.; *Heloise to Abelard,* March; *Musings in the Country,* June; *Parting; Unprofitable Servants,* Oct.
1850. Sketch: *Pugnoses,* Aug.
Poetry: *Apathy,* May.
1851. Sketches: *Kinneho,* March; *Confessions of a Dreamer,* July, Aug., Sept., Oct.

2. Seba Smith

1840. Tale: *Cure of a Hypochondriac,* Feb.
Poetry: *To My Wife,* May.
1841. Sketch: *The First Blood of the Revolution,* June.
Tale: *Robert Wylie of Townsend,* Aug.
1843. Sketch: *Examples of Female Heroism,* Dec.

C. *The Southern Literary Messenger*

1. Elizabeth Oakes Smith

1839. Poetry: *To the Amaranth,* Aug.; *The Water,* Nov.
Story: *The Lover's Talisman,* July.
1840. Sketches: *The Worthies of Virginia,* Jan.; *Shelley,* Nov.
1841. Poetry: *The Old New England Meeting House,* Sept.
1842. Poetry: *The Sinless Child,* Jan., Feb.; *Progression,* April.

2. Seba Smith

1839. Tale: *Uncle Pete and the Bear,* June.
1840. Sketch: *Gleanings from Early New England History,* Jan.
1841. Poetry: *Youth and Age,* Jan.

D. *Graham's Magazine*

1. Elizabeth Oakes Smith

1842. Sketches: *The Bud and Blossom,* Aug.; *Essay on Characterless Women,* Oct.
Poetry: *Thou Hast Loved,* July; *To Fanny H.,* Sept.; Sonnet, Nov.; Sonnet, Dec.
1843. Sketches and Essays: *How to Tell a Story,* Jan.; *The Student,* April; *The Witch of Endor,* April; *Jack Spanker and the Mermaid,* Aug.; *A Word Upon Conceitedness,* Oct.
Poetry: *Repose,* June; *The Wife,* Sept.; *Sympathy,* Oct.; *The Twice-Told Seal,* Nov.
1844. Sketch: *Thoughts Before a Duel,* Sept.
Poetry: *Sonnet to the Opal,* Jan.; *The Soul's Ideal,* Feb.; sonnet, April; *Distrust,* April; *Mental Solitude,* May; *Sympathy,* Aug.
1845. Essay: *Sentiment of Self-Sacrifice,* Feb.

Poetry: *Hallowe'en,* Jan.; *Life a Mystery,* April; *The Rustic,* May; *Wayfarers,* June; *Stanzas,* July; *Self-Distrust,* Aug.; *Song,* Sept.

1847. Poetry: *Solitude,* Jan.
1848. Poetry: a sonnet, Dec.
1848. Tale: *The Sagamore of Saco,* July.
1851. Poetry: a sonnet, Oct.
1852. Poetry: *Te Laudamus,* Jan.; *The Sigh,* May.
1855. Sketch: *The Anniversary,* Sept.

2. Seba Smith

1847. Tale: *The General Court and Jane Andrews,* Oct.

VII. Seba Smith's Books not Included under Downing Letters

1841. *Powhatan, A Metrical Romance in 7 Cantos,* N. Y., Harper and Brothers.
1846. *Dewdrops of the Nineteenth Century,* (Floral department by John B. Newman), J. K. Wellman, N. Y., 1846–47. Issued without plates, 1846. Issued as *Gift of Friendship* and *Keepsake,* 1848. Issued under original title by Lamport, Blakeman and Law, N. Y., 1854.
1850. *New Elements of Geometry,* N. Y., Putnam. London, Bentley.
1854. *'Way Down East or Portraitures of Yankee Life,* N. Y., Derby and Jackson. Boston, Samson and Phillips. Philadelphia, J. E. Potter. Cincinnati, J. C. Derby. Later editions: N. Y., 1855, 1859 and 1860; Phila., 1866, 1876; Boston, 1884.
1864. *Speech of John Smith, Esquire, not delivered at Smithville, September 15, 1861.* Pamphlet. N. Y., Bryant and Co.
1846. *Miscellanies* (listed in Allibone).

VIII. Books of Elizabeth Oakes Smith

1838. *Riches Without Wings,* Boston, G. W. Light; 3rd ed., N. Y., 1839.
1842. *The Western Captive,* N. Y., The New World Series, Vol. 2, nos. 3 and 4. German translation ascribes book to Seba

Smith. In europaische Bibliothek. Grimma, 1847–52, Verlags Comptoir. Bd. 144, 145. Smith, Seba. Der Indianer Hauptling und die Gefangene des Westens. Eine Erzählung aus dem letzten amerikanischen Kriege. Uebers. von Fr. Gerstacker. 2 Thle. (382 s.).

1843. *The Sinless Child and Other Poems,* N. Y., Wiley and Putnam.

1845. *The Poetical Writings of Elizabeth Oakes Smith,* N. Y., Redfield; 2nd ed., 1846.

1845. *Rosebud,* Boston, Saxon and Kelt.

1845. *Dandelion,* Boston, Saxon and Kelt; Buffalo, N. Y., G. H. Derby and Co., 6th ed., 1849.

1845. *The Moss Cup,* Boston, Saxon and Kelt; Buffalo, N. Y., 1847, 1849, G. H. Derby and Co.; 6th ed., N. Y., 1849, Derby and Jackson.

1845. *The True Child,* Boston, Saxon and Kelt; Buffalo, N. Y., G. H. Derby and Co.

1847. *Stories for Children,* Phila.; Boston, J. B. Smith and Co.

1847. *The Mayflower,* edited by Mrs. Oakes Smith, Boston, Saxon and Kelt.

1848. *The Mayflower* (all new selections), edited by Mrs. Oakes Smith, Boston, Saxon and Kelt.

1848. *The Lover's Gift,* Hartford (listed by Sabin).

1848. *The Salamander Found Amongst the Papers of the Late Ernest Helfenstein,* ed. by Elizabeth Oakes Smith, N. Y., Geo. P. Putnam's. Later eds., 1849, 1852; London, 1849, Putnam's; Title changed to *Hugo,* N. Y., 1851, 1855, John S. Taylor; To *Mary and Hugo,* N. Y., 1856, Derby and Jackson.

1850. *The Roman Tribute,* N. Y. (listed by Sabin, not seen).

1851. *The Good Child's Book,* Buffalo, N. Y., G. H. Derby and Co.

1851. *Woman and Her Needs,* N. Y., Fowler and Wells, 3rd ed., Syracuse, N. Y., 1853.

1852. *Shadowland: or the Seer,* N. Y., Fowler and Wells.

1852. *Hints on Dress and Beauty,* N. Y., Fowler and Wells.

1852. *Romance of Nature,* by W. Miller, ed. by Mrs. Oakes Smith, N. Y., J. C. Riker.

1853. *Old New York or Democracy in 1689,* N. Y., Stringer and Townsend.

1853. *The Sanctity of Marriage,* Syracuse, N. Y.

1854. *Bertha and Lily,* N. Y., J. C. Derby; Boston, Phillips,

Sampson and Co.; Cincinnati, J. C. Derby; London, Avid and Tunstall, and Ward and Lock, Warwick House, Salisbury Sq. E. C.

1854. *The Newsboy,* N. Y., J. C. Derby; Boston, Phillips, Sampson and Co.; Cincinnati, H. W. Derby. American News Co., n. p. 1869.

1864. *Black Hollow,* N. Y., Beadle and Adams.

1867. *Bald Eagle or The Last of the Ramapaughs,* N. Y., Beadle and Adams; London, 1870; N. Y., J. S. Ogilvie and Co., 1882.

1868. *The Sagamore of Saco,* N. Y.

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